Sarah Tarlow (Ed.)
The Archaeology of Death in Post-medieval Europe

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Edited by Sarah Tarlow

Managing Editor: Katarzyna Michalak

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1 Introduction: Death and Burial in Post-medieval Europe

What does the below-ground archaeology of death and burial teach us about people in the post-medieval past? How much did practices vary across Europe? Do mortuary practices in this period reflect religious beliefs, social aspirations, thoughts about life and death, emotional responses to love and loss, or a combination of those factors? Or none of them? Given the volume of raw archaeological evidence, these questions remain surprisingly hard to answer.

The archaeology of death and burial in Europe in the post-medieval period is not a very extensively developed research area. In part this mirrors the low level of attention paid to post-medieval archaeology generally in many European countries, and its relative newness as a disciplinary field. Additionally, post-medieval mortuary archaeology is overwhelmingly determined by the needs of developers rather than researchers, and is geographically concentrated in those areas (generally larger cities) where churchyards, cemeteries and other burial grounds of the last 500 years have been threatened or destroyed because of new development programmes. Because of the economic imperatives of conducting commercial archaeology, which are different to the freedoms often enjoyed by university-based researchers, the results and interpretations of much of the work that is carried out are not always published in a widely accessible form. Moreover, there is very little literature that offers synthesis or generalised observations on the archaeology of post-medieval death and burial even within a single country and none that attempts to draw general conclusions internationally. Overwhelmingly, archaeological writings on the subject are related to a single site only; overwhelmingly those works are more descriptive than interpretive; and overwhelmingly they are not well-known by other archaeologists, even within their own countries. (There are of course exceptions: some sites are superbly interpretive and some, like the Spitalfields site in London (Molleson & Cox, 1993; Reeve & Adams, 1993), are well published and widely known internationally. But these sites are very few).

However, there is now a real appetite on the part of those researching the burial practices of the last 500 years or so for an opportunity to present and discuss our work. This volume represents, we hope, an early contribution to an international discussion of what is still a new and fragmented area of archaeological research. Why now? Two reasons:

first, attention to burial practices of the last 500 years is intimately linked to the general recognition that the archaeological study of recent centuries can be an interesting and valuable part of our disciplinary endeavours. New journals such as *Archaeologia Postmedievale* in Italy, the Czech *Studies in Post-Medieval Archaeology*, and the publications of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Archäologie des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit in Germany and the Irish Post-Medieval Archaeology Group signal both the volume of post-medieval archaeology

in some European countries and its growing academic respectability (see Courtney, 2013; Mehler, 2013 for useful recent overviews of post-medieval archaeology in Europe). Secondly, legislation designed to protect the archaeological heritage in many European countries demands that archaeological excavation and recording be carried out when construction, mineral extraction or other activities disturb historically and prehistorically significant deposits. Because of the huge expansion in European towns and cities, the quantity of urban archaeology undertaken has increased vastly; this is mostly medieval and post-medieval in nature. So post-medieval burial archaeology demands attention because there is now so much of it. However, our ability to frame and answer research questions, to synthesize the great number of disparate site reports that are generated every year has not kept pace with the generation of primary data. Despite the publication of some really excellent site reports and some very thorough studies, we still need to do a lot of work to pull together our original observations. In particular, we need to be able to cross national borders to examine the development of burial practices in an international way. Questions such as the influence of legislative or religious directives, the spread of fashion, the power of tradition can only be addressed fully if we have a good contextual knowledge of what was happening elsewhere. For example, the impact of the Reformation is often stressed as a significant factor when explaining changes in burial practices in the post-medieval period (e.g. Marshall, 2002). A comparison between Protestant, Catholic as well as practices within other faiths and beliefs is necessary to understand the role of religion in burial practices relative to other social and cultural developments in society (Curvers, 2011; Kenzler, 2011).

The present volume builds on a project which aimed to compile and interpret all the archaeologically excavated and described evidence of post-medieval burial in Britain and Ireland that I could find. It took me more than three years, even with the help of Annia Cherryson, and the resulting gazetteer (Cherryson, Crossland & Tarlow, 2012) is, I am aware, still far from exhaustive. Through discussion with European colleagues who have also worked on later historical burial practices, I became aware of interesting similarities and differences in our various areas, even when the burials we were examining all came from Protestant contexts in northern Europe around the same time. Yet I could find no archaeological work that attempted to look across European borders, or to facilitate comparison. Because of the existence of parallel national and linguistic traditionsthis can even be a problem for people working in neighbouring countries. This volume begins to fill that gap. For example, our review of post-medieval burial archaeology in the UK revealed a number of trends which would be more meaningful in a European context. These include, among other things:

–The continuing adherence to a West-East orientation in burial among all denominations except Quakers, until the rational spatial organisation of the new municipal cemeteries of the 19th century.
–Overall, an increasing relocation of control over burial from Church to State, as burial becomes subject to an increasing burden of legislation, which specified

aspects of funerary practice from the fabric of grave clothes to the permitted treatment of a suicide. Despite local variations and some exceptions this is a gradual trend that slowly unfolded between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries.
–A paucity of grave goods. Such goods as do appear, always in a minority of graves, are more likely to be personal than spiritual items (for example, jewellery or false teeth rather than rosaries or religious medals)
–The relative infrequency of commemoration or permanent marking of graves, at least until the 19th century, and often into the 20th.
–Dominance of single burial being gradually replaced over 19th century by burial and commemoration as couples or family groups.

Not all these patterns that characterise the period in Britain are the same across Europe: one of the interesting things to emerge from reading this collection of papers with British eyes is that many of the contributors record far higher and more diverse quantities of grave goods, clothes etc. than are typically found in a British burial ground. Similarly the importance of religious artefacts appears much greater, especially in countries with two or more powerful religious confessions, such as much of Germany where large populations of Catholics and Protestants co-existed. The largely unchallenged dominance of a single Protestant confession in most of the UK perhaps made this aspect of identity less important.

There have been high profile and extensive excavation projects of post-medieval cemeteries in many European countries in recent years, which have begun to attract the attention of archaeologists in those countries, but which are still not as widely known as they should be outside their national tradition. A couple of examples would be La Ciotat, a 16th to 19th-century cemetery in France (Richier, 2011), and Marco Milanese's investigations (2010) of the plague cemetery of San Michele in Alghero, Sardinia. Both of these projects were major excavations which are well published in their own countries. Both have implications for our work in other countries.

1.1 Problems We Share

Post-medieval burial archaeologists in many European countries struggle with the same issues:
–A general unwillingness to see the archaeology of later periods as 'real archaeology' at all. Sometimes heritage legislation does not extend to post-medieval sites; university departments have only recently

begun to teach the archaeology of later periods. Funding for the excavation, post-excavation analysis and full publication of such sites can be hard to find in the face of hostility or incomprehension from people inside and outside of the profession. Moreover, when significant

assemblages of post-medieval burials are excavated and published they often occur on multi-period sites and so they are subsumed in a publication which is described and marketed as primarily medieval. The potential readership of such work might well not realise the significance of the data.

–The absence of a research tradition with a range of approaches and questions relating to mortuary practices. In lieu of this, the field has been to a large extent dominated by osteoarchaeology, with a focus on demographic and pathological issues. Although much of this work is excellent, it has often eclipsed work on more social and cultural aspects of burial archaeology. This contrasts with the study of medieval death and burial, where cultural aspects of mortuary practice are far more extensively considered and purely osteological work plays a smaller part. Kenzler (pers. comm.) tells me that the opposite situation prevails in Germany, where osteological study dominates medieval burial archaeology, and mortuary practices are more extensively considered in relation to the much newer study of post-medieval burial grounds. In many other areas of post-medieval archaeology, American historical archaeology has influenced the direction of study in Europe. In the mortuary field, however, there is far less comparable archaeological work, perhaps because of the highly politicised and controversial status of human remains in American society and archaeology.

–The difficulty of locating comparable sites and synthetic or interpretive work. Even within one country much of the archaeological research that has been carried out into post-medieval burial grounds can be hard to track down. Because of the scarcity of secondary and synthetic work, the option of following up references cited in books and articles is often unavailable. I am sure that I cannot be the only person to have had conversations with other archaeologists who say: "Oh, so you're interested in historical burial grounds? So you must know about the excavations at St Mary's just along the road from me?" Usually the answer is, sadly, no, I don't! Such work has often not made it to publication, or is only briefly mentioned in a local journal's summary of ongoing work, or publication has taken the form of a couple of pieces of paper in a filing cabinet in some regional office.

–Many of those who find themselves excavating historical period burial grounds are general archaeologists employed by contracting archaeological organisations. They have no particular expertise or interest in this kind of site, and often find that there is nobody else in their institution who can help and advise, nor is there an interest

group, journal or conference they can turn to. They are struggling alone to make some kind of sense of their work.

–Sometimes, local people and even colleagues can feel that is ghoulish or disrespectful to disinter the bodies of those who have died in the last few hundred years. Although the excavation of post-medieval cemeteries is not usually motivated purely by curiosity – and is usually an attempt to record a site that is about to be destroyed or damaged anyway – research involving the graves and

bones of the post-medieval dead can irritate sensitivities, even of people who have no objection to the excavation of older burials. Public misconceptions about the nature of archaeological research and the legal and ethical frameworks of burial archaeology can fuel suspicions that archaeologists act out of ghoulish prurience and without respect towards the dead.

Yet historical burial grounds are an enormous archaeological resource and have the potential to inform studies not only of demographic questions or the history of disease and mortality, but also histories and archaeologies of the body, of emotion and changing relationships, of religious and other beliefs about death, of changing social relationships, tastes, values and aspirations: key cross-period, international and interdisciplinary research objectives.

1.2 Aspirations we Share: The Value and Potential of Post-medieval Mortuary Archaeology

Mortuary practices have been one of the main sources of evidence for archaeologists since the earliest years of our discipline. Egyptian pyramids, north European megalithic burial mounds and lavish early-medieval graves are all well known inside and outside the profession. In these contexts archaeologists are accustomed to recognising that burials can tell us not only about mortuary practice, but also about the kind of society that they related to. Processual archaeologists tried to find ways in which burial practice could index degrees of social complexity or stratification (Binford, 1971; Brown, 1981; Saxe, 1970; Shennan, 1975; Tainter, 1978). Their successors examined them for indications of the operation of power, the work of ideology, symbolic representations of status and so on, all of which would tell us about the values and understandings of past societies (Barrett, 1994; Hodder, 1982; Kristiansen, 1984; Shanks & Tilley, 1982). For some reason, burials in historical periods was rarely interrogated so closely or interpreted so ambitiously as prehistoric ones, though in recent years medieval burial practices have been subject to analysis of a more interpretative kind (Andrén, 1993; Gilchrist, 2008; Williams, 2006, 2013). Howard Williams suggests that "late historical mortuary practice suffers from the same intellectual imperialism as early historic archaeology; namely that prehistorians have let 'prehistory' exist and fester as a legitimate subdiscipline and gain theoretical credence as the discipline of archaeology… It is a tyranny of prehistory that we have politely let reign. It has many insidious ramifications, including entire projects that skip

vast tracts of early historic and (sometimes) late historical periods (Williams 2014, pers comm).

Excavated post-medieval burial archaeology in Europe, in contrast to prehistoric sites, has not often moved beyond the level of site report. Certainly in anglophone countries, post-medieval graveyards have been very much overshadowed in research

terms by their medieval counterparts. Although many site reports are excellent in terms of the level of detail, they remain essentially descriptive, often fail to integrate specialist data very successfully; and are limited in ambition to the illumination of local history.

Death and commemoration have had a substantial material impact on the rural and urban landscapes of Europe in the last 500 years. The archaeology of death in this period includes both above- and below-ground material. Above ground are the memorial monuments to individuals, families, groups and communities. These include gravestones in cemeteries, the collective and communal memorials to wars disasters or martyrs, and architectural structures of death such as columbaria, mausolea, cenotaphs and memorial chapels; and can be either individually crafted or mass-produced.

Commemorative monuments constitute an excellent resource for our qualitative understanding of attitudes to death in the past (Mytum, 2000). What are the dominant metaphors and analogies of death, expressed both in words and in the material form of the grave? What can the language of commemoration and the traditions of burial tell us about attitudes to family, to ethnic, religious or gender identity? In many contexts the choice of commemorative language is a political decision (e.g. Mytum, 1994). Other local politics of status and power are also negotiated through the size, ostentation, positioning, material, form, decoration and language of commemoration (Cannon, 1989; Little et al., 1992). Classic marxist interpretations of commemorative practice, such as, for example, Parker Pearson (1982) and McGuire (1988) have considered the role of monuments in naturalising or obscuring unequal relationships of power and wealth in society.

The potential of the above-ground archaeology of death is more extensively reviewed in Tarlow (1999a), Mytum (2004) and Sattenspiel & Stoops (2010). The focus of this volume, however, is on the archaeology of the dead themselves: the below-ground material remains of buried individuals recovered by archaeological excavation. It also considers burials recovered from crypts, vaults and mausolea, which have been influential in several countries – see, for example, Reeve & Adams (1993) and Fingerlin (1992). The authors included in the volume represent a diverse range of countries, perspectives and approaches. However, all share a belief that the potential of the below-ground archaeology of death in the post-medieval period has not yet been fully exploited. Much of the work in this area to date has taken place outside the academic framework of research themes and established programmes. Research questions, when stated, are often low-level: what was the site's period of use? How far did the cemetery extend? And so on. We believe that this rich evidence can and should be used to address much more ambitious questions about the nature of society, belief and cultural history in the

recent past.

1.3 Health and Demography

Post-medieval burial grounds are a source of very large assemblages of human remains, the scientific analysis of which can deepen our knowledge and appreciation of numerous aspects of social history. Large assemblages, such as more recent sites often provide, enable more statistically valid observations of the health and nutritional status of past communities, including the prevalence of many chronic and congenital conditions that affect the skeleton. At the same time, biases in deposition, preservation, collection and analysis mean that in later historical periods there are often better sources of evidence for basic population demographics: sex ratios, absolute population numbers, age at death and the impact of epidemic disease are all usually more reliably observed in historical sources such as parish registers, census data and so on (Appleby, 2011; Ubelaker, 2008). The evaluation of physical and medical characteristics at an individual, group or population level should be a first step in the development of complex and nuanced understandings about the cultural, medical and social aspects of the human past, and not normally an end in itself.

1.4 Social Meanings

Detailed analysis of human remains can reveal much about the living society to which those past people belonged. However, by paying attention to the burial practices we can learn a good deal about past attitudes to death, beliefs about the body, expectations and aspirations in terms of age, gender and social position, about emotions and family relationships, religious identity and faith, and about how those who threatened society were policed and disciplined.

For example, whether a person is buried in a single grave, with their spouse, with several family members or with unrelated people in a mass grave can tell us about attitudes to family and marriage, and feeds into broader histories of emotion. In my own work in Orkney there was a significant change from the individual commemoration of a single person on each headstone in the mid-18th century to commemoration of a whole family in the mid-19th century and then to the married couple in the early 20th (Tarlow, 1999a).

One widely observed trend in post-medieval mortuary practice is the so-called 'beautification of death', manifested archaeologically in the increased attention given to the aesthetics of the corpse. Burials in

special grave clothes (Janaway, 1998), with false teeth and hair, such as are known from English sites such as St Nicholas, Sevenoaks, Kent (Boyle & Keevill, 1998, p. 92), or St George's Bloomsbury in London (Boston, Boyle & Witkin, 2006), and evidence that the body was buried with foliage or flowers which would both look attractive and help to mask unpleasant odours (Tranberg, this volume) all suggest that a high level of care went into preparing the body for disposal. This attention to beautification can be seen in many parts of Europe

from the 17th century but is clearest in the 19th century, a period during which the cultural elaboration of death in art, literature and social practice was highly developed. Beautification of death relates to modern attitudes to the body, to an emotional and individualised pattern of interpersonal relationships and perhaps also to a waning or changing religious faith. Interestingly the attention paid to elaborating, enclosing and disposing carefully of the corpse is not compatible with the doctrine of either Catholic or Protestant theologians that attention to the body is worthless and vain, and that the soul should be the focus of spiritual beautification instead. However, the care expended in laying out a beautiful corpse is evidence of an emotional investment in the body (Nyberg, 2010). Perhaps especially in Protestant contexts where the bereaved were no longer able to affect the fate of a loved one's soul after death by endowment or prayer, the body acquired special significance in mediating that relationship (Tarlow, 1999b).

The post-medieval period was a time of complex and multiple beliefs about the dead body, many of which existed in parallel in the same group. For example, care for the beautification of a highly individualised body as the focus of emotional relationships grew alongside a modern, scientific understanding of the human body (Ariès, 1981; Farrell, 1980, pp. 4-5; Swedlund, 2010; Tarlow 2011). The development of this medical model required a regular supply of human bodies understood as universal and interchangeable bodies rather than unique individuals (Harris, Robb & Tarlow, 2013, p. 175) to allow knowledge to be extended and shared. While many people reaped the benefits of the new medicine, very few were prepared to allow their own bodies or those of their kin and friends to be used for this purpose. The archaeology of 18th to 19th-century Europe thus reveals an interesting geography of bodily anxiety in the form of devices and practices designed to secure new burials against grave-robbers (Scottish examples are especially common and well-known – see, for example, Ritchie, 1921).

Prehistorians have traditionally looked to cemetery data as a way of determining the kind and degree of complexity and stratification of past societies. In the case of post-medieval historically-known societies there are usually better sources for such information. However, cemetery patterning in this period does allow us to see how material culture, spatial organisation and the adoption of innovative or traditional practices can operate to legitimise, uphold or challenge social relationships of power, authority and inequality. Parker Pearson's classic study of Cambridge cemeteries concluded that the apparent egalitarianism of memorial monuments – nearly all of the mid-20th century monuments are small and plain – actually functions ideologically to mask real differences in wealth and power (Parker Pearson, 1982). In this way, the study of post-medieval cemeteries is not

usually undertaken to uncover facts about the past that are not otherwise knowable (most basic ‘facts’ about this period are more easily understood through historical documents, though in the absence of relevant documentary sources, archaeological evidence can have an important role to play in revealing primary truths about the experience of illiterate, oppressed or

subaltern groups, *contra* Moreland, 2001). Instead, attention to the material practices associated with known communities, events and processes can help to reveal the mechanisms by which relationships, beliefs, identities and aspirations are produced and reproduced.

It has been noted that mortuary practices are often conservative and slower to change than some other areas of human experience (Rebay-Salisbury, 2012; Williams, 2006), but trends in funerary tradition can be a useful barometer of social attitudes. One example would be the treatment of infants and children (Baxter, 2005). Although infants and children rarely have a major social role in terms of power and authority, and their deaths do not usually provoke the kind of social re-organisation or renegotiation that is occasioned by the death of a wealthy and powerful individual who needs to be succeeded or inherited from, such losses nevertheless have and had profound emotional impact on bereaved parents and families. Responses to child death are socially variable, and there might even be discrepancies between the official, collective and often religious response and the personal response of those directly affected, as witnessed by the Irish cillini tradition – the special, unofficial burial places maintained for unbaptised babies and other marginal individuals such as suicides and strangers (Donnelly & Murphy, 2008). In Germany, the special treatment of children and especially of unbaptised babies, is well-known archaeologically (Gutscher & Ulrich-Boschler, 1998; Ulrich-Boschler, 1997).

Related to the special treatments accorded to children are those reserved for people who die outside the norms of thier society. The 'deviant' dead (a term critiqued by Aspoeck (2008) because of its negative connotations – 'deviancy', she points out would often be better understood as 'non-normative' or 'minority') attract special burial treatment. Executed criminals, for example, were frequently buried beneath their gallows – a tradition that is known in many parts of northern Europe (Auler, 2007; 2008). Analysis of the composition of 'deviant groups' and the respects in which mortuary treatment might differ help us to better understand the core values of a community. In this period, the treatment of the war dead, bodies of 'strangers' and unknown bodies washed up by the sea, and the clandestine disposal of excommunicants, the unbaptised, victims of murder and so on all provide examples of special groups whose treatment illuminates normative social attitudes.

1.5 Politics, Ethics and Anxieties in the Treatment of the Post-medieval Dead

Archaeological excavation of human burials is an emotionally and at times politically charged subject. For the most part, European archaeologists have not had to negotiate the turbulent waters surrounding the excavation of human remains in North America or Australia (Pardoe, 2013; Watkins, 2013). Nevertheless, disturbing the burials of the dead is a sensitive area, especially when relatively recent burials are involved

(Sayer, 2010). Looking at a number of examples in the UK and elsewhere, Sayer (2010) shows that in Europe the excavation of historically recent graves is equally likely to be embraced or condemned by the local community, and that archaeologists can often foster public goodwill by being open and informative about the goals, process and results of their research. When protests occur these can be on religious, political or environmental grounds. For example, opposition to the excavations of human burials at Bonn Square in Oxford was largely voiced by the same ecological protesters who campaigned against the removal of trees and the redevelopment of this urban area. By contrast, criticism of the excavation of the Australian and British First World War casualties at Fromelles, France, represented an emotionally powerful opportunity for opponents of the Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, to condemn his poor decision making (Sayer, 2010, pp. 87-92). Thus protests about the excavation of the recent dead can sometimes be stress points for the eruption of existing tensions around other grievances or differences.

Although people can sometimes find it disrespectful or uncomfortable to excavate the dead of recent years, archaeological research on graves in modern history can also be cathartic, especially in post-conflict situations. Archaeology can help to complete stories and clarify historical events, especially when the chaos of conflict, or deliberate concealment or distortion of events, has obscured the truth. The role of archaeology in identifying and completing the histories of the victims of the Spanish Civil War and the Francoist period is increasingly well known (González-Ruibal, 2007; Renshaw, 2011). Similarly the First World War battlefields of northern Europe have been subject to a great deal of archaeological attention. This has not only enhanced our historical understanding of the nature of battle and soldiers' experience of the front line, but has also had emotional and psychological benefits for the descendants, relatives and communities of those involved as well as for the modern inhabitants of the battlefield areas (Desfossés, Jacques & Prilaux, 2008; Jacquemot & Legendre, 2011; Robertshaw & Kenyon, 2008).

Furthermore, although the excavation of graves can be controversial, the commemoration and memorials of the dead are often significant foci of community and public projects. In many countries there is great interest in family and genealogical history and memorial cultures are often central to such studies.

1.6 Challenges for the Future

1.6.1 Relevance

Post-medieval mortuary archaeology, like other kinds of post-medieval archaeology, needs to engage fully with the broader discipline, and indeed with other traditions outside archaeology. It is not useful to generate a list of research priorities that have no point of contact with the development of methods, theories and approaches

that our colleagues are pursuing. Such a hermetic sub-discipline can neither learn from nor contribute to a challenging and academic environment. The contextually-rich archaeology of burial in later periods stands to make significant contributions to areas of current interest in the discipline including archaeologies of emotion and experience (Tarlow, 2000, 2012), religion and belief (Insoll, 2013) and the body (Hamilakis, Pluciennik & Tarlow, 2001; Robb & Harris, 2013). We can help to develop more sophisticated approaches to understanding the significance of lineage, descent and relatedness by bringing together archaeology, history and genetics in innovative ways. Additionally, and importantly, by breaching the defences around sub-disciplines, new questions and more radical thinking are promoted. What if human burial is considered alongside animal burial, for example? Or if the values and aspirations evident in the decoration of ceramics, the organisation of a town or the shape of a window can enhance our understanding of the social and cultural meaning of death? The glorious thing about historical archaeology is its rich and diverse data; it is at its best when it makes connections: between a gridded street plan and a creamware plate; between burial in day clothes and drinking from a Chinese tea cup; between field hedges and church pews.

Although the specialist skills of the osteoarchaeologist, the archaeobotanist and others with highly-developed areas of expertise are invaluable to students of burial practices, we need to move further towards the integration of insights derived from specialist work into overall interpretative frameworks. Post-medieval archaeology continues in many countries to be dominated by osteoarchaeology, with limited attention paid to burial practice in comparison to the mortuary archaeology of prehistoric or medieval periods.

We cannot expect that developers and planners will recognise the importance of post-medieval burial grounds if we cannot provide engaging, interpretive, historically-informed bodies of work which combine rigorous analysis and adventurous interpretation around them.

1.6.2 An End to Uncontrolled Data Collection

More controversially, we need to recognise that there are sites that we do not need to excavate. Every Palaeolithic grave or cemetery with archaeologically recoverable remains is an exciting and important contribution to a small corpus. In the post-medieval period we do not have a problem with accessing huge numbers of graves and whole assemblages of many hundreds or thousands of individuals. Simply because there are so many recent deaths (the World Health Organisation

estimates that around 55 million people died during 2011), there are huge numbers of recent graves also. Post-medieval burial grounds are being disturbed almost daily, and there is often pressure to excavate and record the burials before they are reinterred. However it is entirely appropriate to ask whether the automatic collection and recording of all historically

recent cemeteries is necessary or appropriate. Moreover, when modern burial grounds are disturbed by various authorities there can be asymmetries of treatment between different religious, ethnic or class groups. Archaeologists must consider that the politics of collusion in some schemes to destroy burial places may not be something we are happy to swallow. Especially given the ethical concerns about disturbing burials, discussed above, human remains – even pathological specimens – need only be considered for excavation and collection when they answer a clear research need. And there is no need to deploy expensive archaeological expertise in recording huge quantities of data – especially skeletal data – when the records are ultimately destined to rest forever in a filing cabinet or in some form of data storage that will never be accessed (though see Gieson 2013 for some thoughtful ideas on this issue). It is also irresponsible to undertake excavation without the resources for the proper study and curation of material remains – and post-medieval cemeteries frequently produce finds including textiles, wood and delicate botanical remains which all need to be properly cared for. Therefore all archaeological investigation of post-medieval cemeteries must be carried out in response to a clear research question, and the data collected and samples retained should be adequate to address that question. Speculative recording nearly always omits the key information needed for interpretive analysis. A clear idea of research priorities will help us decide which burial sites will repay archaeological attention, and which can be subject only to basic monitoring and respectful reinterment.

1.6.3 Safeguarding, Recording, Preserving

Given the ethical anxieties around the excavation and especially the retention of the bodies of the dead, what is the best way to ensure that archaeological research carried out today is available for future researchers? How can we record our field and post-excavation work in a way that is useful for future researchers into burial practice, as well as research based on human osteology? Can we devise sampling strategies that respect ethical and social sensitivities, do not overburden our limited curatorial resources, and also constitute a genuinely useful collection for researchers?

1.6.4 Working with Communities

There have been notably successful community archaeology projects

involving later historical burial grounds in North America, such as the Freedman's Cemetery in Dallas, which managed to negotiate racial tensions to conduct a genuinely collaborative and consultative excavation that local African American groups experienced as empowering, although not without difficult and contested issues (Davidson & Brandon, 2012), in contrast to the early problems during the excavation of New York's African

burial ground (Perry, 1997). Community participation in cemetery excavation projects is not so well established in Europe, but represents an arena in which co-operative approaches to the past and improved popular appreciation of archaeological practice – especially in such a 'suspicious' activity as the exhumation of the dead – can be enhanced. It is worth noting that the significant community, if there is one, might not be the local community. Given the displacements, relocations, migrations and, of course, genocides, in European history, the genetic or cultural descendants of those buried might not be local, although they might also feel a legitimate interest in a site. 'Community' is, of course, not a straightforward term.

1.6.5 Engagement with other Subdisciplines

While we may lament the failure of our prehistorian colleagues to pay much attention to the interesting archaeological insights proceeding from the study of later periods, it is important that we also benefit from the insights of archaeologists working on other chronological periods. For example, several of the papers in this volume deal with the issue of grave-goods, which seem to be much more frequent and widespread in the post-medieval period than a strictly textual reading of the theological and historical sources suggest. Archaeologists of the classical and medieval world have examined and interpreted the phenonmenon of grave-goods extensively within their particular contexts: there can be no doubt that we are in a position to benefit from their considered analysis (see, for example, Härke's recent (2014) review and discussion of how one could and should interpret the phenomenon of grave goods).

1.7 This Volume

Most of the papers presented here originated in a session held at the European Association of Archaeologists annual meeting in Helsinki in 2012, chaired by Jenny Nyberg of Stockholm University and myself. Some additional contributions were solicited or volunteered after the conference, and some of the original participants were unable to continue to publication here. For these reasons, this volume does not aim for an even European coverage or seek to include a full range of thematic or chronological contributions. It is intened as a conversation starter – an opening offer in what we hope will be a continuing exchange of ideas.

Contributions to this volume are organised into two main sections. The first part deals with the body itself. Tagesson's chapter takes as its starting point a view of the body as a cultural object, an approach very usefully developed in prehistory by the osteoarchaeologist Jo Sofaer (2006). He interprets his observations of the care taken in preparing the human body for death within the context of emergent capitalism in early 18th century Sweden, and a more individualised way of relating to the world

and to others. In his characterisation of the changing nature of care for the dead body, Tagesson finds evidence of a wider cultural shift in terms of individualisation and emotional bonds that can also be traced in the development of urban space and patterns of material consumption that characterise Sweden's Golden Age.

In the same section Muižnieks considers the way that the dead body is dressed for burial. From the late medieval period into early modernity two separate traditions are evident in Latvian burial practice: simple shroud burial, and clothing the corpse in normal clothing. While both types of practice were Christian – and indeed both practised by both Protestant and Catholic families – these parallel traditions seem to represent the co-existence of an international, European religious belief, and local folkloric traditions.

Dramatic stories are evident in Europe's unusual burials – its mass graves, plague pits and exceptional interments. Souquet-Leroy, Réveillas and Castex discuss how the degree of care for the dead bodies of victims of epidemic disease is related to changing ideas about disease and medicine. As modern medical ideas of contagion took hold across Europe, the willingness of the living to have extensive contact with diseased bodies reduced considerably, and this is clear from their detailed study of a number of epidemic burial sites in France.

Angela Boyle looks back over many years of osteoarchaeological research on the post-medieval period with some reflections about the research trends and possible futures of this area of study.

The second section of papers explores the way that the burial of the dead creates memories and shapes posterity for the living and for future generations. Gonzalez returns to Sweden to consider the clothing and reclothing of two very high status royal burials. Burial dress not only reflects status of the buried individual, but also actively creates legitimacy for an elite lineage, and can be manipulated and reinterpreted even years after the original interment.

Kenzler looks at the practices of Protestant and Catholic burial in Germany – a particularly fascinating part of Europe after the Reformation because of the parallel existence of the two traditions. Notable differences in practices such as the inclusion of burial goods relate not only to liturgical requirements but also to the values of emerging modernity – individuality, cleanliness and the significance of the body for example.

Valk makes fascinating use of ethnographic and folkloric research on beliefs about death to explore the relationship between the living and the dead, throwing light on the way that material objects can mediate this complex part of experience. His contribution reminds us of the range of traditional beliefs that were still in currency only a few years ago, even in modern, industrial Europe.

The final section considers the placing of the dead. This relates both to the geographical spaces allocated to burial – considered in some detail in Anthony's analysis of the organisation of bodies and charnel in the 18th and 19th-century Assistens Cemetery of Copenhagen, but also the social place of the dead in relation to the living.

Gabriela Blažková, Martin Omelka and Otakara Řebounová discuss burial practices in post-medieval Prague, when adherence to Catholic practices was quite closely policed. People responded by conforming to the requirements of the Church, but at the same time managed to individualise their dead through the inclusion in graves of very personal and idiosyncratic items such as medical aids.

Tranberg's discussion of folk practices and particularly of the use of plants in Finnish graves illustrates another way in which a meaningful and often emotional relationship between the dead and the living was articulated. By bringing the insights of environmental archaeology – in this case the study of plant remains - to the post-medieval period, new sources of evidence are opened up.

I am very grateful to all the authors and the other participants in the European Archaeological Association meeting in Helsinki which inspired this volume, especially Jenny Nyberg who co-organised the session with me. Their enthusiasm, patience and willingness to express their ideas in English is very much appreciated. Thanks to Howard Williams and Estella Weiss-Krejci for their helpful and constructive comments on a draft of this volume; to Mark Pluciennik for help with copy-editing, and to the editors at De Gruyter Open, especially Katarzyna Michalak, who have been most patient and helpful.

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Göran Tagesson

2 The Human Body as Material Culture – Linköping Cathedral Churchyard in the Early Modern Period

Introduction

This article discusses the human body as a kind of material culture, an active medium for expressing values and beliefs, as well as hopes for the life after this. The excavation of the cemetery at Linköping Cathedral in 2002–2003 comprised 570 individuals from the period 1100–1810. Here we have a unique opportunity to study living conditions and changes in mortuary practice over a long period

The material has been stratigraphically divided into three medieval phases (1–3) and three post-medieval phases (4–6). The period from *circa* 1500 until the end of the 17th century (phase 4) saw a distinct continuity in burial traditions from the Late Middle Ages. The great change actually came in the 1680s, when burial customs became much more heterogeneous. Arm positions were allowed to vary, the deceased was buried in normal clothes and it became much more common to put personal belongings in the graves. Phase 6 comprises the period 1780–1810, which is characterized by the introduction of a linear system, with burials taking place as deaths occurred, with no consideration for family, gender, social status etc.

Finally, the material is discussed in terms of specific themes: cemetery users, the cemetery as a social arena, and changes in mortuary practice. The change in grave ritual at the end of the seventeenth century can be interpreted as an expression of a more individual attitude to the human body and the grave as a social medium. The time around 1700 was a watershed between the united church of Sweden's Age of Greatness, perceived as the obedient instrument of the absolute monarch, and the more open attitude of the Age of Liberty, when new revival movements such as pietism began to gain influence, with their more personal and individually coloured faith. Recent studies in contemporary micro-rituals concerning changing modern grave rituals, indicates that the material culture as well spatial arrangements involved are very important for the new habits. It is possible to interpret these detectable changes in the material culture as an example of the concept of modernity and a desire of expressing new attitudes of individuality towards the deceased.

Material culture has for a long time been an important subject for cultural historians and not least archaeologists. When archaeologists and cultural historians discuss material culture it is frequently a matter of clear and manifest remains. But even the human body can be seen in the same way – as a social project, the most intimate and personal such venture. Through the body we communicate our identity

and how we want our environment to apprehend us. We hide and we assert ourselves precisely with the body as the means, in life as in death. At the same time, the body is a meeting-place for all kinds of contradictory messages. We shape – or forbear to shape – our bodies according to ideals we may not always sympathise with (Hamilakis et al., 2002; Tarlow, 1999a, 2002b).

Latter-day research has emphasised the human's range of choices and capacity for expression. The history of the body is in many cases the history of the individual's relationship with the world around, for good and ill. We can see the body as an arena for differing interests, sometimes in the form of economic and social pressures, political power or the desire of commercial forces demanding that we appear in a particular way. In this way the body becomes a discursive field where different volitions meet and are reshaped (Foucault, 1998). At the same time the individual body carries the memory of our biological life and social history. The human body can be compared to an osteological database, with clear traces of the individual's conditions of life, health and illnesses, which in their turn reflect social distinctions and changes over time. The question is how factors such as life-span, child mortality and maladies in general have changed over time and how these factors can be interpreted as differences in human living conditions (Arcini, 1999; Arcini et al., 2012).

The dead body is a particular field for transformation. Through the treatment of the body after death and in the grave, a remodelling and communication occurs with the surrounding world which is not always in agreement with the deceased's own identity and volition. Here a transformation takes place which is frequently dependent on the wishes of the collective, the authorities or by convention. The grave can reflect the identity and social position of the deceased, but often it is even more an expression of the wishes and intentions of the surviving relatives (Tarlow, 2002a).

The following article deals with the view of the human body and Christian burial customs during a period of radical change: the Reformation and the break-through of modernity. The starting point is taken from an archaeological investigation in the cemetery of Linköping Cathedral in southern Sweden (Fig. 2.1). The cemetery functioned continuously *circa* 1100–1810 and the investigation in 2002–2003 comprised burials from the whole period. For Swedish circumstances, and even internationally, this investigation seems almost unique in capturing the whole sequence of burials over a 700-year period. The material is of special significance in that burial customs and osteological information can be analysed in an unbroken sequence for both the Medieval and the Early Modern periods.

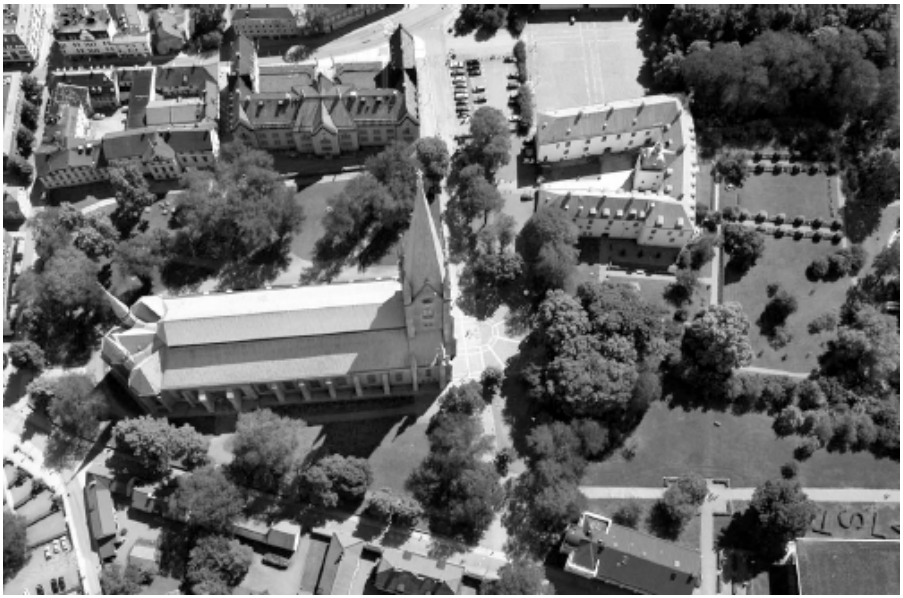


Figure 2.1: Linköping Cathedral from the air. Photo: Göran Billeson.

2.1 Previous Research

Research about medieval churchyards has a long Swedish tradition, where questions of burial customs and health matters have been in the forefront. Research has principally focused on cemeteries from the Middle Ages, with questions about the social change in burial customs in relation to changes in the composition of the population and social integration (Redin, 1976; see also Arcini & Tagesson, 2005; Cinthio, 2002; Kieffer-Olsen, 1993; and further literature referenced here). Another prominent theme in cemetery research is how health and living conditions are reflected in the human osteological material (Arcini, 1999, 2003; Gejvall, 1960). An interesting theme has recently focused on burials outside ordinary and respectable society, temporary burial places during periods of plagues and other diseases, burials outside churchyards and at places of executions (Arcini et al., 2006; Carelli, 1995; Fendin, 2008).

If the number of large and small investigations into medieval churchyards has been great inside and outside Sweden, corresponding research into later ages has been much less (Arcini et al., 2006; Jonsson & Nordström 2003; Stibéus, 1998). In England the extensive examination of graves from Spitalfields in London has attracted great attention, with incredibly well-preserved and accurately dated material from 1729–1852

(Molleson & Cox, 1993; Reeve & Adams, 1993). These investigations are important, but mainly provide isolated analyses without the possibility of comparison over time.

On the other hand, there is copious literature about burial customs and burial art during the post-medieval period, mainly based on art-historical, historical and ethnological material, from a Swedish (e.g. Hagberg, 1937; Lindahl, 1969) and from an international perspective (e.g. Gilchrist, 2003; King & Sayer, 2011; Litten, 1991). In his comprehensive survey of burial practices in the historic period, Harold Mytum treats the material culture of cemeteries and graves in early-modern and modern times from a broad cultural history perspective. He is at the same time forced to conclude that the opportunity to study changes in burials in the archaeological material is very restricted in England and North America, as large-scale investigations are broadly absent (Mytum, 2004). Given this background, the investigation in Linköping appears very special, with the opportunity to study changes in the cemetery over a long period with material virtually unique in the European context.

The investigation in Linköping during 2002–2003 has been previously presented in other publications (Fig. 2.2). The graves have been analysed from their stratigraphical position in the churchyard and with respect to relative chronology, facts which form the basis for discussion on the change in burial customs. Here, above all, a stratigraphical analysis with regard to the position of the arms in the graves, according to the Swedish scholar Lars Redin's classification (Redin, 1976), has been compared with the prevalence of graves with or without coffins. This resulted in a classification into six phases, three medieval and three from early modern times. The osteological investigation was realised in two stages (Arcini & Tagesson, 2005; Tagesson & Westerlund 2004). An extensive analysis has been carried out over the last year to ascertain the identity of the graves and thereby permit the osteological data to be related to the preserved church registers (Arcini, 2008). Lately, the material has been used for analysing an increase in stature during the Early Modern period in Sweden (Arcini et al. 2012).

2.2 The Cemetery as a Social Arena

The results of the investigations have been discussed previously, *inter alia* proceeding from analysis of the users of the churchyard and the cemetery as a social arena. Our study has shown that the cathedral churchyard was used by different individuals and social groups during different periods, which can be studied in the composition of the graves as regards sex and age. The somewhat clear differences in the medieval material have been placed in relation to the development of Linköping, initially a purely ecclesiastical regional centre, which in the later

medieval period came to be an ever more composite urban community (Arcini & Tagesson, 2005).

After the Reformation the cathedral became a parish church alongside the older parochial church of St. Lars, at the same time as the town declined in importance. Post-Reformation, the social composition of the cemetery must have changed radically. The churchyard came to function as a parish cemetery, presumably with a broader range of users as a result. At the same time, many family graves and grave monuments inside the cathedral from the 16th and 17th centuries indicate that the cathedral continued to have high status as a place of burial. Whether this also applied to the churchyard is an open question. Several scholars have been of the opinion that the cemetery in general declined after the Reformation, with social equalisation and degradation as a result (Lindahl, 1969, pp. 101ff; Troels-Lund, 1984).

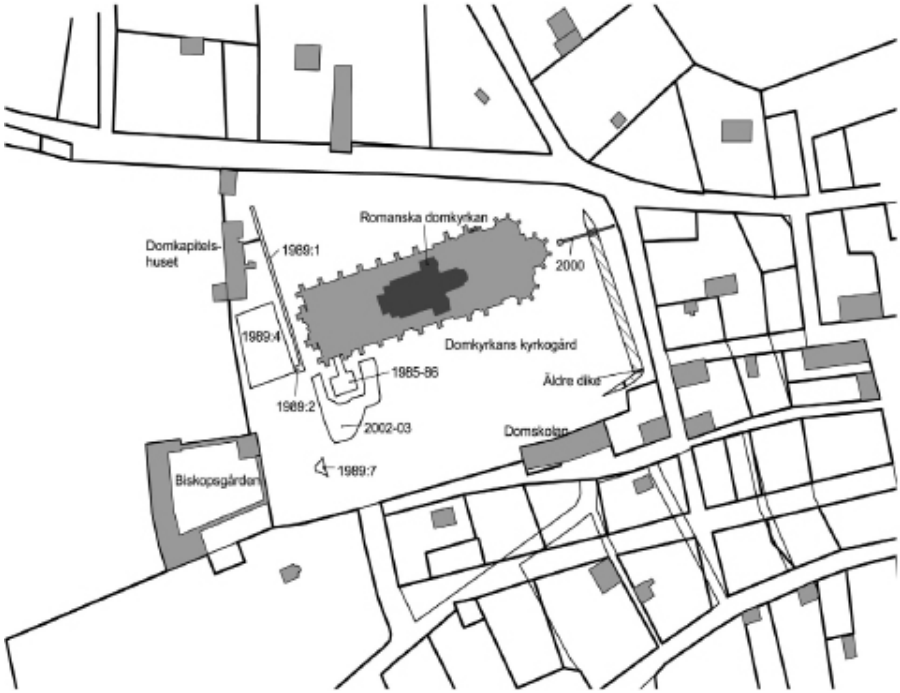


Figure 2.2: The Cathedral precinct, with the site of archaeological investigations in 1985-86, 1989, 2000 and 2002-2003. The black continuous line represents plot boundaries according to the map of 1696. Dark shading shows medieval stone buildings, thin lines correspond to reconstructed medieval plot boundaries and streets. Graphics: Göran Tagesson and Lars Östlin, RAÄ.

In a recent seminar paper at Linköping University, the question of the social differentiation of the cemetery and in the cathedral was treated for the years 1695–96, based on meticulous entries in Linköping's death and burial register. The distribution of men, women and children varies to some extent in the different zones of the churchyard, as does that for different social strata. The identified persons can also be compared with the detailed cadastral map of Linköping from 1696, and in many cases there is agreement between the social position of the burial location in the churchyard and that of the location of the homestead in the town. For the cathedral there is a grave map from 1722, where the price of graves in different positions is clearly indicated. It is obvious that the most easterly graves were the most expensive, with

the price decreasing the further west one moved. Altogether, however, this analysis shows that the social variation between occupation/title, land tenure in the town and grave-position in the churchyard is not unequivocal (Nyström Tagesson, 2006). The grave as a social marker and as material culture is thus not a direct reflection of social and economic conditions. They can be interpreted as the result of many different factors – as a social strategy.

In 1751 the burials at the other church in Linköping, St Lars, ceased and the cathedral churchyard became the town's only cemetery. There was a clear tendency for an ever larger area of the churchyard to be used for burials. Graves that can probably be associated with the last phases have been found in the south-western part of the cemetery. The area south of the cathedral was however far too small. As early as 1789 we find information that the cemetery was full, and suggestions were made also to use the area north of the cathedral. This indicates that burials north of the church were not customary in older times (Hassler, 1976; Nyström Tagesson, 2006).

In the 1780s a linear grave system was introduced in the cemetery, which means 'that all bodies to be buried in the cathedral churchyard should be ordered one after the other without consideration of parish, social status or age' (Hassler, 1976, p. 24). By this time society has broadened and the social topography of the cemetery become wholly egalitarian, with high and low status graves intermixed. We can see clearly that this applies to the most recent generation of graves, where men and women, children and the old lie mixed with each other. The occurrence of a number of graves with wrought-iron coffin handles indicates the presence of graves of higher status. The family graves inside the church were, however, in continued use until the 1810s.

At the same time we should not forget that social status could be expressed through the increasingly common use of gravestones. In that way we can say that development proceeded from an older period with egalitarian graves but with a clear social topography in the cemetery. This changed in the Early Modern period, where the location in the churchyard had played out its role, while the individual grave and the gravestone alone had to express social status and identity. Thus during the whole period from 1100 to 1811 we see a continuous process, in which the users of the cemetery changed from being an almost exclusive circle of clerics in the Early Middle Ages to becoming a burial ground for members of increasingly different and broader social strata. This indicates that the development in Linköping goes from a medieval situation with several churchyards, each with a homogeneous social or cultural composition, to ending up with a single but more heterogeneously-populated cemetery (cf. Mytum, 2004, p.17; Sayer, 2011,

pp. 202, 210).

At the same time, the development reflects in an interesting way large and revolutionary events in the little town, with a progression from an apparently complicated and heterogeneous social and religious milieu to one that is more homogeneous. It is clear that the tendency towards fewer churches and cemeteries represents an important medium for social control, which in time made possible an effective tool for state absolutism and an appurtenant orthodox unitary church.

2.3 The Grave and the Individual

The burial customs in the cathedral cemetery, reflected in the Middle Ages in the positioning of the arms and the absence of personal items, are totally in accordance with those observed by Lars Redin in Skanör, namely that the arm positions show a very homogeneous picture and that they are contingent on chronology (Redin, 1976). The oldest graves had the hands parallel with the sides (A-type), while during the High Middle Ages they were folded over the pelvis (B-type). During the Late Middle Ages the arms were laid over the abdomen or up towards the chin (C- and D-type). Interestingly enough, these late medieval types were shown to be in use some time after the Middle Ages. We can even distinguish a quite new type of arm position, called type E, with the arms along the sides, the hands laid at an angle on the hip-bone and the lower arms below the iliac crest of the hip (Figs. 2.3 to 2.5).

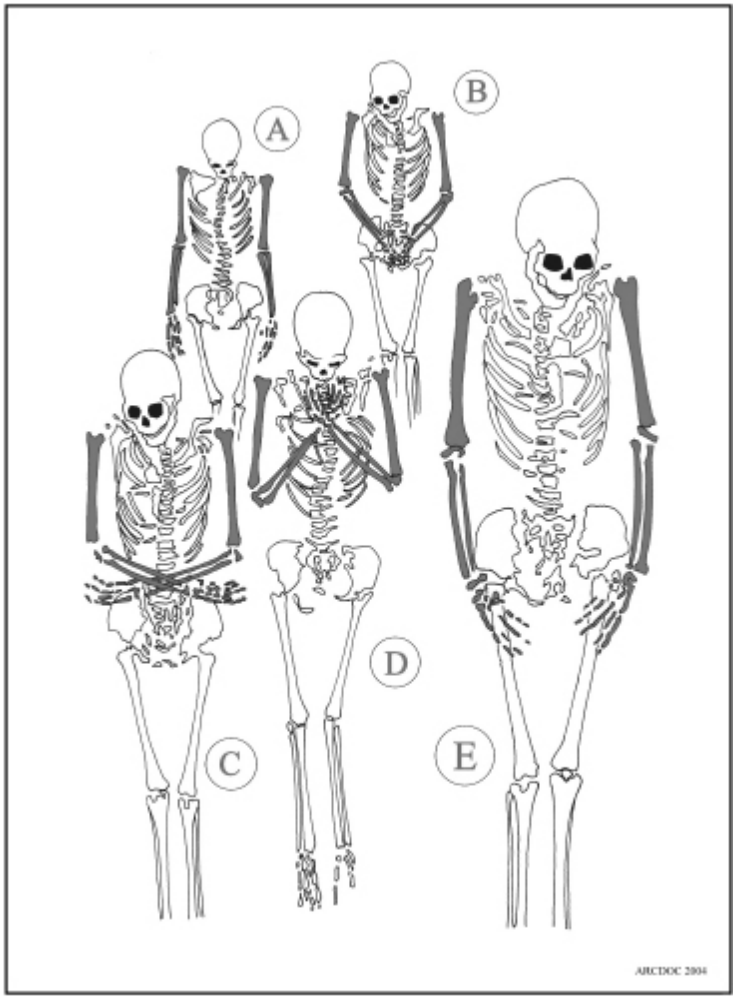


Figure 2.3: Arm position types A-E. Drawing Richard Holmgren, ARCDOC.

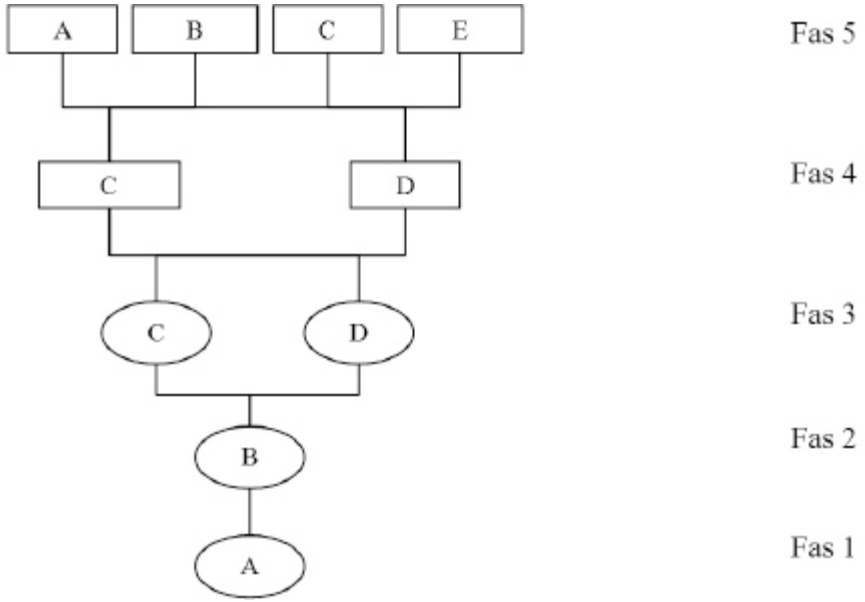


Figure 2.4: Stratigraphic matrix of grave types distributed by phase. Oval indicates burial without coffin, rectangle wooden coffin. A-E correspond to arm position types.



Figure 2.5: Grave from phase 6, 1780-1810, in wooden coffin with arm position E. Photo: RAÄ.

In the analysis of the cathedral churchyard graves it has emerged that burial customs underwent change, shown partly through the different arm positions and coffin shapes during different periods, and partly in the degree of homogeneity. The customs have been established as particularly homogeneous during all periods up to the end of the 17th century. It is true that a great change occurs between phases 3 and 4, in that wooden coffins were introduced in all graves. It is not clear when this change took place, possibly during the 16th century (Fig. 2.4). The use of coffins can be conceived as a form of container, where the body rests without being mingled with dirty earth and with other individuals. During the same period an increase in, and wider social spread of, the use of gravestones occurred. These can also be seen as a sort of lid over the graves, to prevent them being dug asunder or intermixed. This shows that during early modern times increasing importance was placed on the individual and the sanctity of the body.

Several British scholars have discussed the same tendencies and interpreted them as a change in the relationship between the living and the dead. After the Reformation the situation of the deceased could not be influenced by intercession. The funeral changed in importance to emphasise a taking leave of and a consigning of the deceased to God. The distance between the dead and the living came to increase drastically after the Reformation, and the grave came to be reduced to an expression of the memory of the dead person. Parallel with this, the body became increasingly important as the centre of the individual personality and the identity of the deceased. The body's decomposition became ever more problematic, which is clear from various measures to preserve the grave and the body intact (Gilchrist, 2003; Litten, 1991, pp. 32ff; Tarlow, 1999a, 2002). In funeral art this change is evident. Ever greater care is devoted to the memory of the dead and the grave comes to express personality, status, birth and economic standing (Lindahl, 1969; Mytum, 2004).

In the cathedral cemetery, phase 4 (16th century to 1680s) represents a continued extremely homogeneous and uniform burial style. We could interpret this as the result of a long tradition with a very set and strict way of treating the dead. Several scholars have wished to interpret the arm positions in eschatological terms (e.g. Cinthio, 2002). Such an interpretation proceeds from the belief that the survivors in the preparation of the deceased gave expression to collective thoughts about life after death. This underlines that the individual during the Middle Ages and for a period in early modern times should first and foremost be seen as part of a collective, where it is the theological and popular image of life and death prevalent at the time that means more than the individual. We can at the same time assume that a uniform burial

tradition has manifested itself. In funeral art a continuity and conservatism in the framing of graves in the early Reformation period has previously been noted (Lindahl, 1969, pp. 65ff; Mytum, 2004).

In connection with phase 5, however, grave practices were radically changed, in that a greater variation in arm positions was allowed. This change, thanks to numismatic dating, we can say began during the 1680s, and may be interpreted

in terms of a more individualized burial practice (Arcini & Tagesson, 2005, p. 298). This chronological framework seems to be unique in Sweden; no other excavation covers the total period from the Middle Ages up to the Modern period. An ongoing major archaeological project in the Swedish town of Nya Lödöse (next to present day Gothenburg) seems to underline the tendencies in Linköping. The cemetery of the town church covers the period from the late 15th century till the 1630s, and has so far revealed about 700 individual graves. A very preliminary interpretation shows that almost all of the graves are lacking traces of coffins, and comprise a rather homogenous grave ritual according to the uniform arm positions and lack of personal items (pers. comm. Dr. Christina Rosén).

The alteration at the Linköping cemetery has possibly to do with a change in how the deceased was prepared for burial, perhaps clothed and made presentable for the mourners to say their goodbyes, which in later times was called 'viewing the body'. During the Catholic period burial took place as soon as possible after death, but after the Reformation there was a tendency towards an ever longer preparation process. This came to have a social dimension: the longer the time between death and burial, the higher the social position (Lindahl, 1969, pp. 84ff; Troels-Lund, 1984, pp. 83*ff*). The long preparation time of course left room for greater care of the dead and thus allowed for individual variations.

At the same time we see an interesting change whereby it becomes much more common for the dead person to be buried in his or her day clothes. We have found buttons and remains of clothing that indicate this (Arcini & Tagesson, 2005, p. 299). In other contexts, including from Spitalfields in London, as in ethnological records in Sweden, there is evidence of special burial vestments (Hagberg, 1937; Reeve & Adams, 1993, pp. 104ff; Troels-Lund, 1984, pp.117ff). This custom has recently been observed in the very northern part of the Swedish kingdom, at the cathedral cemetery in Oulu (present Finland), dated from the 17th century to the 1780s, where many of the deceased had simple burial garments or were covered with a shroud, in special cases also in their daily clothes (Lipkin & Kuokkanen 2014). Remains of special burial clothes, e.g. half a slipper, were also observed in a burial chamber in Kalmar domkyrka in 2009 (Ohlsson 2010) and in the Royal Naval Church in Karlskrona (Nyberg 2010).

Conditions are not propitious in Linköping for the preservation of organic material, but there is nonetheless much to indicate that the textiles found in the investigation, interpreted as day clothes or special burial garments, was getting more common from the end of the 17th century onwards (Lundwall, 2006).

During this period the number of objects in graves also notably

increased (*cf*. Mahoney-Swales et al., 2011, p. 223). It can be a matter of personal belongings such as jewellery which accompanied the dead person, for example rings and earrings, but also other rather odder objects, such as a clasp-knife, clay pipes and even a snuff-box (Fig. 6). Even in the plague cemetery of Pestbacken in the province of Blekinge (southern Sweden), a large number of the dead were buried in their ordinary clothes. It has been suggested that plague victims had to be quickly buried with their clothes

and personal belongings as people were afraid of contagion (Arcini et al., 2006), a supposition that could also apply in the case of Linköping. It does not however explain the fact that graves with clothing and personal effects are not found in older phases. Probably it is after all a case of change attributable to altered burial customs.

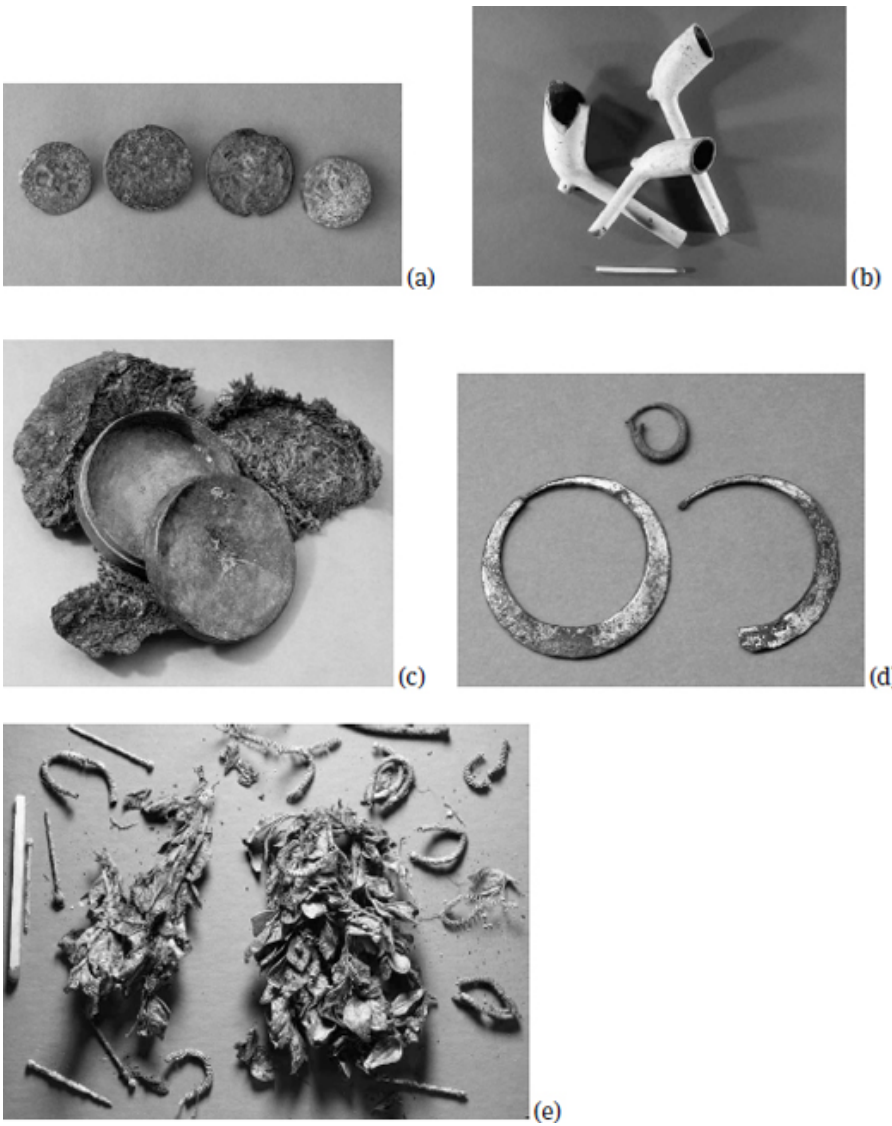


Figure 2.6: a-e. Four coins from graves, dated to 1665-1670/4. Finds in graves from phase 5-6: clay pipe, snuff box, gilded silver earrings, and fragment of burial coronet. Photo: Göran Billeson.

A further phenomenon is the many funeral coronets that are found in graves from this period. These consist of wreaths and flowers, often with intertwined copper threads and glass beads, in isolated cases even gilded. From later periods we know that coronets were above all given to girls and young unmarried women, who according to tradition were consecrated Brides of Christ. In our material it is obviously mainly girls and women who are associated with these coronets, even quite newborn girls. Thanks to these investigations we can now say with certainty that these coronets first came into use at the end of the 17th century. The custom that small dead girls were dressed as Brides of Christ was opposed during the 19th century by the church authorities, but proved to be difficult to stop. It is clear that here we are dealing with a manifestation of popular customs, which during just this period had the chance to flourish (Hagberg, 1937; Troels-Lund, 1984, pp. 126ff). A somewhat similar tradition is the maidens' garlands, well known and recorded in most parts of Britain and in other parts of Europe, made in the shape of a bell and used on the funeral coffin and later hung in the church. This tradition is dated to the Early Modern period and later, and was used at funerals to celebrate the lives of those who died in a 'state of virginity' (Morris, 2011).

Nyberg has noted that burial coronets in the Linköping material have also been found in some men's graves (Nyberg, 2005). This means that coronets could be given to children and unmarried adults of both sexes, which has also been observed in other cases (Hagberg, 1937, pp. 185ff). The grave material is interpreted in relation to the change in gender roles in the Early Modern period, where among other things the modified importance of marriage has previously been observed. The occurrence of finger rings can be interpreted as an expression of the growing importance of marriage during this period, at the same time as Nyberg wishes to interpret the personal objects, jewellery and clothes as a stage in showing care for the individual by making death less repellent (Nyberg, 2005; *cf.* Tarlow, 1999a).

In the graves in Linköping, traces of moss, straw and other organic material has been observed, but not yet fully analysed. This phenomenon has recently also been observed in the urban grave material from Nya Lödöse (pers. comm. Dr. Jens Heimdahl). This is also well known in aristocratic graves. In the coffins in the Soldan burial vault at Sura church, dated to the 18th century, the body was placed on a bed of sawdust and hay (Jonsson 2009, p. 135f), and in the graves of the family Brahe on Visingsö, traces of hops, herbs and roses were found in the coffins in the grave vault in Brahekyrkan, These may have been placed in a cushion or mattress, interpreted as a masking of the odour from the corpse in order to make the death more beautiful (Nyberg 2010;

2013, p. 267).

The historian Ann-Sofie Arvidsson has also shed light on these questions in her dissertation about church and state authorities and their relations to death and mourners. On a superficial level, there are no significant changes in the funeral liturgy during this period that could easily explain the profound changes in the treatment of the corpses. However, Arvidsson stresses the fact that the preparation of the corpse

was a task for the relatives and the survivors. In the new church law of 1686, the priest was even prohibited from being present at the '*utfärdsbönen*', i.e. the praying before taking leave from the house for the funeral act in the church. According to the author, this gives the mourners and relatives greater influence on the preparation of the body, and diminishes the influence of the church on these intimate tasks (Arvidsson, 2007, pp. 237ff). Arvidsson, who discusses the results from Domkyrkoparken in Linköping, wants to explain the changes in terms of diminished liturgical control, which would let older vernacular traditions come to the surface. This theory is interesting, but in my opinion not quite appropriate. We have no indications that personal items or the use of personal clothes in graves could have been a sort of suppressed folk tradition. The gap between pre-Christian habits and recorded changes in the Swedish 17th century is at the same time too big.

In my opinion, these changes do not concern only a change in burial custom as such; they must also imply a radical alteration in the view of what the individual represents. During the Early Modern period, the human body undergoes a change from being part of a collective to becoming an individual who can be ascribed particular attributes and personal characteristics (Tarlow, 2002a). The change, during the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period, from only being a corpse collectively awaiting the Resurrection, to becoming a body representing an individual – for example a smoker or an official – is radical in a thorough-going way.

It can also be useful to compare these alterations with similar contemporary tendencies. The Swedish theologian Jan-Olof Aggedal has studied modern grave rituals and notices an increasing tendency to move from a strict and uniform use of funeral shrouds towards the use of personal clothes and even placing personal items in the coffin. Furnishing the coffins with personal objects, such as teddy-bears, wedding rings etc. was previously opposed by the church, and as late as the 1990s considered as inappropriate in some districts, but today it is more widely permitted. Aggedal discusses these habits as micro-rituals within a broader, more official macro-ritual, and stresses the importance of the personal and private meeting between the dead and those left behind: an opportunity and a moment for bidding the dead goodbye. This may be understood partly as a more permissive attitude from the Church and the undertakers, partly as a way of making possible personal expressions of the personality of the deceased, a way of telling that the she/he is not anonymous, but still a unique person (Aggedal, 2006).

The act of taking leave, as well as the placing of personal objects in the coffin, may be understood as a very private and important act, and the objects, clothes and spatial arrangements as meaningful and with strong attachment to the dead person. The changes observed in the

grave material from the 17th century as well as from contemporary analysis may be understood against the background of profound socio-cultural changes in society. But in both cases, the new micro-rituals of expressions of personal connection between the dead and those left behind, are made possible within the changed macro-rituals, i.e. the enabling of a private moment, as well as the

absence of any officials at this moment. These results also points out the importance of the material culture, as observed in the archaeological record and the contemporary analysis, as extremely important, not being just a reflection of changing mentalities, but instead a very active medium of these mentalities.

2.4 Into an Early Modern Culture?

The change in burial practice has been proved to begin during the 1680s and in itself seems to be a paradox. The 17th century was a time when Sweden enjoyed Great Power status, and a period when the Church was seen as a strong and cohesive factor. In scarcely any other period of our history have the church and state cooperated to such a high degree – one faith, one church and one king. Vicars around the country were one group among many civil servants with the task of influencing the local populace in both private and public affairs. As one scholar has expressed it, religion became the cement that consolidated unity both inwards and outwards. During the 17th century Sweden became an even more homogeneous state, where the only permitted creed was seen as decisive for cultural and political unity in the country (Villstrand 2011, pp.324ff).

Under the king Karl XI (1660–97) many of the centralising tendencies of the age came together. The absolute monarchy was effectuated at the *Riksdag* (parliament) of 1680 and the supremacy of the state over the Church was confirmed by the church ordinance of 1686. During the same period, too, a series of ecclesiastical books appeared – such as a new catechism in 1689, a church handbook in 1693, a new hymnbook in 1695 and finally King Karl XII's Bible in 1703 – all examples of the monarchy's view of the Church as an effective moulder of public opinion and of the role of the state as the Head of the Church (Montgomery, 2002, pp. 140ff, 156ff).

Tendencies to a more personally-tinged religiosity were however present during the whole of the 17th century, through the pious prayer books and other religious tracts that were published. During the later 17th century influence began to be felt from evangelist movements in Germany, above all Pietism, with its emphasis on the individual's relationship to God. It was primarily in the educated middle class in the larger towns that these new ways of thinking gained a foothold, a development which brought in its train a questioning of the established social order. During the period up to and including the first half of the 18th century, however, these tendencies were strongly opposed and their proponents imprisoned and persecuted. It was not until the 18th century, under the influence of the fall of the absolute monarchy after

the death of Karl XII in 1718 and the later Enlightenment, that these ideas gained greater currency (Lenhammar, 2000; Montgomery, 2002, pp. 62ff, 171ff, 180ff; Mansén, 2011: 411ff).

The second half of the 17th century thus embraces an absolute and autocratic monarchy combined with a church whose task was to legitimise the ascendancy

and act as a tool for uniformity in religious life. The position of the priesthood came to be strengthened during this time, in their role as the monitors of both morality and orthodoxy in the local community. More recent research however shows that the strong state authority and the Lutheran church scarcely succeeded in changing people's consciousness in depth (Villstrand 2011, p. 334ff). For example, the Swedish historian Göran Malmstedt has shown in his studies that a popular, almost medieval, religious mentality persisted, and not until the 18th and 19th centuries was it replaced by new 'modern' conceptions of the difference between sacred and profane, holy day and weekday, and how one should behave in the church (Malmstedt, 1994, 2002).

It is thus hardly a few simple changes in the prevailing ideology or church tradition that had an obvious effect on the form of the graves in the cathedral churchyard in Linköping. At the same time, there are clear tendencies in 17th-century society that point forward towards a new view of society. Changes in town planning and building practices are well-known phenomena which are often interpreted in this direction. In the 1650s, the important medieval harbour- and merchant town of Kalmar in southeastern Sweden, at the border of Denmark, was moved to an adjacent island, on which a very modern, strictly geometrical town-plan was constructed (Tagesson 2013), and after the devastating fire in 1655, the town of Norrköping came to have an entirely new town plan of gridiron pattern according to Renaissance ideals (Hållans & Tagesson, 2003, pp. 13ff). Even Linköping had some share in this in the 17th century when the new, straight *Storgatan* (the High Street) was drawn through the town down to the new bridge of Stångebro (Tagesson, 2002, pp. 166ff).

The Swedish scholar Nils Ahlberg has shed light on this process of town-plan reformation during the Early Modern period. Ahlberg points out that this process was very decisive and involved almost all towns in Sweden and Finland, and also in the Swedish provinces elsewhere in the Baltics. The introduction and accomplishment of large-scale Renaissance-style town-planning was without counterpart in contemporary Europe, and must be interpreted as an important mental change in the society (Ahlberg, 2005).

At the same time there are clear examples of a new housing culture gaining ground in both towns, seen most clearly in that the dwelling-house moved to a more exposed position on the street boundary of the plot. Other contemporary phenomena are the separation of the kitchen from the dwelling, the appearance of windows and chimneys, and also changes in the combination of crockery (Ersgård, 2003; Hållans & Tagesson, 2003, pp. 13ff; Tagesson, 2002, p. 198, pp. 260ff).

These tendencies have been characterised as a culture of separation. Former prominent collective features in dwelling habits and mealtime

customs diminished, at the same time as the appearance of a greater number of rooms, chairs, forks and so on can be interpreted as an increased awareness of the importance of the individual. Several scholars have further pointed out that the emphasis on the façade and the exterior, in both houses and people, came to be ever more important as the outer manifestation of the inner (Johnson, 1996; Rosén, 2004, pp. 255ff; Rosén, 2006; West

& Tarlow, 1999). The boundary between the private and the public becomes clearer in these examples, and thereby the possibility and the desire to display the private sphere in relation to the public space increased.

Developments were not unequivocal, however. Many of the examples of individualistic features indicated above first became more discernible in the 18th century. In a famous study, the Nestor of American archaeology, James Deetz, rather pointed to the mid-18th century as the decisive breakthrough period for an individualised world view (Deetz, 1996). A number of features of the Nordic housing culture also clearly first make their impact during the 18th century (Erixon, 1984, pp. 58ff, 77; Rosén, 2004). In his major review of cemetery culture in recorded times, Mytum showed that many late burial traditions were already established during the 17th and early 18th centuries, but it was not until after the mid-18th century that they gained general currency, and the development and professionalization of burials and churchyard culture achieved their major penetration (Mytum, 2004). Similarly, the tendencies that Tarlow noted respecting the changed view of the body and the body's dissolution in the Early Modern period can chiefly be attested during the 18th and 19th centuries (Tarlow, 1999b; Tarlow, 2002a; Tarlow, 2002b).

2.5 Conclusions

The archaeological excavation at the cemetery of Linköping from 2002–03 still seems to be a rather unique material, due to its chronological framework, covering the long period from *circa* 1100–1810, and thus making possible analysis of changing grave rituals in a long time perspective. The beginning of a change in the direction of more heterogeneous burial customs, from a collective to a more individual mentality, including personal daily clothes, personal objects and varied arm positions, can be dated to the end of the 17th century, first observable in a grave from the 1680s. Some of the features, like the funeral coronets, have later on been understood as an expression of popular conceptions which were in conflict with the official view of the Church. The fact that these tendencies can be dated to a specific period, a time of strong unitary and authoritarian culture, suggests the emergence of a popular and individually shaped burial practice that could be articulated in the material culture of a churchyard.

Research into the process of change during early modern times has thus emphasised different aspects, where however one common feature is an increased stress on the individual at the expense of the collective. The time when this became visible is specified differently depending on

the centre of gravity that different subjects and research traditions have. From this we learn that the birth of the individual and the growth of individuality are a complicated and long-drawn-out process. It is then all the more important that, in the archaeological material from the cathedral cemetery in Linköping, we can make these aspects more precise.

The period was an age of transition, from the unitary church of the Great Power period, seen as the obedient tool of an absolute monarch, to the more open outlook of the Age of Liberty, when new evangelist movements such as Pietism began to gain influence, with a more personal and individually tinted faith. Recent studies in contemporary micro-rituals concerning changing modern grave rituals, indicates that the material culture as well as spatial arrangements involved are very important for the new habits. It is possible to interpret these visible changes in the material culture as an example of the concept of modernity and a desire of expressing new attitudes of individuality towards the deceased.

This article is a revised and updated version of a previously published text (Tagesson 2009).

English translation: Norman Davies, Linköping.

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Angela Boyle

3 Approaches to Post-medieval Burial in England: Past and Present

Introduction

This paper is based on my own personal experience while working on a range of post-medieval burials for a major UK commercial business: Oxford Archaeology. The views expressed are entirely my own. Information on other burials is derived from published sources and is not intended to be exhaustive.

The involvement of commercial archaeology companies in the study of post-medieval burial grounds is becoming a relatively mainstream activity. While this is now a country-wide phenomenon, the main focus of investigation continues to take place in London and the south-east, although notable exceptions elsewhere in the country include non-Conformist burial grounds at Swinton, Greater Manchester (Gibson 2014, pp. 15-16) and Coronation Street, South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Rowland and Loe *in press*).

The annual review produced by BABAO[1] (British Association of Biological Anthropologists and Osteologists) for 2013 includes summary reports on the investigation of 12 post-medieval burial grounds carried out by different archaeological contractors across the country (Appleby, 2014, pp. 12-25).

It is now 30 years since the ground-breaking investigation of the crypt at Christ Church, Spitalfields began and 21 years since its publication (Molleson and Cox, 1993; Reeve and Adams, 1993). This was soon followed by the publication of an edited volume of papers which arose out of a conference on 'Death and Burial in England 1700-1850' held at Bournemouth University in 1997 (Cox, 1998). The conference was heavily over-subscribed due to the increasing number of sites being investigated and the rising popularity of the subject so its duration and scope was increased. The speed with which this publication appeared was a direct result of the strong feeling of its contributors and all chapters contained therein are required reading for any student of post-medieval burial. It is worth quoting from the introduction:

'...the value of post-medieval archaeology as a provider of archaeological analogues, and as a means of examining and developing both archaeological and other scientific theories and methodologies is

now fully appreciated' (Cox, 1998, p. xv).

This chapter will attempt to consider approaches to the examination of post-medieval burial grounds over the last 30 years by summarising a small number of key sites and assessing how such projects are approached in the present. Can it be demonstrated that there is now a more unified approach? Is the value of the post-medieval burial resource generally accepted and understood within the archaeological community? The recent publication of a comprehensive review of post-medieval burial in the United Kingdom might suggest that the answer to these questions is in the affirmative (Cherryson et al., 2012). Some criticisms were raised: for example many reports exist only as grey literature and often the bone report is entirely separate from the description of the archaeology. Nonetheless, archaeological engagement with post-medieval burial is very clearly moving in the appropriate direction.

3.1 Archaeological Context

A varied range of remains is to be encountered in the study of post-medieval burial. These include substantial or small crypts within churches, brick-built vaults, single-shaft graves, earth-cut graves, lead coffins, wooden coffins, church interiors and graveyards. Burials from any given assemblage often span the medieval and post-medieval periods and, certainly in the past, this has led to conflict in the nature of the archaeological response (for example, St Nicholas Church, Sevenoaks, Kent, see below). The archaeological contractor is generally faced with a burial ground that contains tens of thousands of burials, often heavily disturbed and intercut with lots of partial, disarticulated and re-deposited remains. These factors can make stratigraphic interpretation difficult. Many coffins are often stacked one on top of another. There are often time pressures, financial constraints, Health and Safety and logistical issues combined with the necessity of collaborating with exhumation contractors. For all of these reasons, sampling is usually required and it is essential to be selective (Cherryson et al., 2012, p. 160). The archaeological excavation at New Bunhills non-Conformist burial ground in Southwark, London is a good recent example of a sensible and successful sampling strategy (see below).

While the majority of assemblages discussed here are from churches and graveyards within the jurisdiction of the Church of England, it is increasingly the case that non-Conformist burial grounds are being excavated in response to threats from development and there are a number of good-quality recent publications concerned with these (eg., Bashford & Siburn, 2007; Brown & Hardy, 2011; Henderson et al., 2013; McCarthy et al., 2012; McKinley, 2008; Miles with Connell, 2012; Webb &

Norton, 2009).

3.2 Logistical and Ethical Issues

The 'peculiar personnel and logistical management requirements' (Reeve & Adam 1993, p. vi) inherent in the study of post-medieval burial have been dealt with in a number of other publications over the years (e.g. Adams & Reeve, 1989; Boyle, 1999; Cox, 1989; Cox, 1994; Cox, 1996a and b; Cox, 2001; Faulkner, 1994; Huggins, 1994; Kirk & Start, 1999; Kneller, 1998; Morris, 1994; Parker Pearson, 1995; Philp, 1995; Reeve, 1997; Reeve & Cox, 1999; Young, 1998) and will only be touched upon here. Among other things, these publications deal with aspects of health and safety, psychological effects on project personnel and ethical concerns.

3.3 Review of Selected Projects

The sites which appear in the following sections are not exclusively those that I have been involved with. Some others are included because they have made a significant contribution to the development of the subject (for example, Christ Church, Spitalfields) or, in my opinion, demonstrate a sensible and successful approach (for example, sampling at New Bunhills, Southwark). The sites are organised in the order that they were examined and all of the Oxford Archaeology projects appear in Table 3.1.

3.3.1 Christ Church, Spitalfields, London

Christ Church, Spitalfields, was the first post-medieval burial resource to have been comprehensively investigated by archaeological methods (Reeve & Adams, 1993, p.1; see also Molleson & Cox, 1993). Excavation took place between 1984 and 1986. It is notable that, in the opening lines, the authors emphasise that the validity of the anthropological studies is underpinned by the archaeological context. Chapter Two of the first volume details the actual process of excavation, partly because many difficulties were encountered which are not common to other archaeological investigations. The archaeological formation processes which operated on the deposits at Christ Church were also key. Commercial clearance by an exhumation company of the vaults was originally considered as an option. However, the Incumbent and the Parochial Church Council agreed to an archaeological excavation,

provided that it could be funded by grants. This is in marked contrast to virtually all other large-scale post-medieval burial projects where sampling is the norm and work is usually carried out alongside exhumation contractors. It has rightly been commented elsewhere that, 'Although the project [Christ Church] is in many ways a model, it is in many ways an exceptional one,' (Cherryson et al., 2012, p. 160).

Table 3.1: Summary of sites examined by Oxford Archaeology and mentioned in text.

Site name	Site type	Project design	Evaluation	Excavation[1]	Exhumation	Type of intervention	Approximate date of burials	Total number of individuals excavated	Publication
St Nicholas Church, Sevenoaks, Kent	Church and churchyard	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Full excavation of church interior, partial excavation of churchyard	Medieval-1875	450 burials/360 skeletons	Oxford Archaeology, Boyle and Keevill 1998, Boyle 1999;
St Bartholomew's Church, Penn, Wolverhampton	Churchyard	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Partial graveyard clearance	Medieval-1899[2]	372 skeletons	Oxford Archaeology, Boyle 2004
St Luke's Church, Old Street, Islington, London	Crypt and graveyard	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Full crypt and graveyard clearance	1751-1880	1053 burials/894 skeletons	Oxford Archaeology, Bradley and Boyle 2004; Boyle et al., 2005, www.academia.edu
Royal Naval Hospital, Greenwich, London	Cemetery	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Partial excavation of cemetery	1749-1857	107 skeletons	Oxford Archaeology, Boston et al., 2008
St George's Church, Bloomsbury, London	Crypt	Yes	No	No	Yes	Full crypt clearance	1804-1856	781 burials/111 skeletons	Oxford Archaeology, Boston et al., 2009, www.academia.edu
Swinton, Greater Manchester	Churchyard	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Archaeological excavation and exhumation[3]	1863-1942	112 discrete articulated skeletons[4]	Oxford Archaeology, analysis ongoing (brief note in Gibson 2014, 15)
Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford	Hospital cemetery	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Excavation	1770-1885	360 discrete articulated skeletons, 23 articulated limbs, disarticulated bone from 5 charnel pits	Oxford Archaeology, analysis ongoing, (brief note in Gibson 2014, 16).

1 Here the term excavation is used to refer to traditional archaeological excavation which is carried out independently of any exhumation process.
2 A small number of 20th century burials were removed solely by exhumation contractors.
3 The exhumed remains comprised all those that were not fully skeletonised, that were in sealed, intact coffins, whether wood, lead or any other such material, that were ancestors of family members who had specifically requested that no analysis be carried out; that could be definitely identified as having been interred after 1900. All such remains were removed and reburied by exhumation contractors (Peter Mitchell Associates).
4 Total does not include exhumed remains.

3.3.2 St Nicholas' Church Sevenoaks, Kent

My first involvement with post-medieval burial was at St Nicholas' Church in 1993. The Parochial Church Council's (PCC) project at St Nicholas, Sevenoaks, *Building for the Gospel*, planned to create a suite of parish rooms as an undercroft below the existing floor levels. This involved excavation of the space below the floor to a depth of *c* 4m thereby destroying all archaeological deposits within the medieval parish church (Boyle & Keevill, 1998, 85). St Nicholas first appears in documentary sources in the *Textus Roffensis*[2] of 1122 and, not surprisingly, the main thrust of the excavation was aimed at recovering evidence of the earliest church structure which was potentially pre-Conquest, and tracing its development through time.

'The study of the resulting human remains and coffin fittings, particularly of the post-medieval period was always seen as an issue of lower priority' (1998, p. 86).

It was clear that burial had occurred throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods, though to all intents and purposes (and in accordance with the project brief) post-medieval, and in particular, 18th and 19th century burials, were not considered to be archaeologically significant. It was decided that they should be removed by a professional clearance company while the archaeological excavation progressed.

During excavation logistical issues meant that archaeologists had to work alongside exhumation contractors (a clear precursor to the more common working practices of today). Although the PCC was initially reluctant to allow archaeological removal of coffin furniture once it was discovered that the intended method of coffin removal involved opening and removing their contents, it was agreed that coffin furniture should be removed and archaeologically recorded. OAU staff felt that the method of removal employed by the exhumation contractors was morally questionable (Boyle, 1999) and, on a more practical level, involved considerable destruction of potential archaeological information. There would be strong opposition today from many parties to the opening of sealed coffins. The speed and methods employed during this process and the depth at which several of the coffins lay necessitated rapid recording and implementation of a sampling strategy.

The original specification required that the human remains be assessed and recorded on site by an osteologist as excavation proceeded. Only basic skeletal data was recorded at this stage, including preservation and completeness, age, sex, stature and potential for future detailed analysis. It was a further condition of the specification that the skeletal remains would receive long-term storage in an ossuary to be

provided by the PCC and would therefore be available for detailed analysis in the future. The recording of metrical, non-metrical, dental data and pathology was

to be undertaken only following MAP-2 style assessment (English Heritage, 1991) and the selection of individuals or groups of skeletons. It was envisaged that where individuals of particular significance, either intrinsically or pathologically, required more detailed analysis, special provision would have to be made. The major problems inherent in what later became described as low-resolution recording are in relation to the calculation of completeness and prevalence of a trait or condition. In the initial stages of excavation the requirements for the basic recording of skeletal data were complied with. However, as the policy of the PCC on reburial and retention was revised during the excavation a decision was taken to increase the level of recording as far as possible to incorporate pathology, dental data and selected metric measurements. The definition of long-term storage was to become a significant issue: the archaeologists believed it meant permanent storage while the PCC saw it as a short- to medium-term alternative to permanent storage. In the event an ossuary for long-term storage was not provided.

The project brief was written before the publication of Christ Church and at the time it was by no means widely accepted that post-medieval burials were of particular archaeological interest. A considerable financial investment is necessary to cover aspects of conservation, analysis and storage of both skeletal remains and coffin fittings. The excavation at St Nicholas has not been fully published and the archive has not been deposited. It is regrettable that the entire assemblage of human remains was reburied in the churchyard at the request of the PCC some years ago in spite of the fact that an osteological report was never completed.

The detailed examination of a single individual with significant dentistry serves to highlight the unrealised potential of much of the assemblage (Cox et al., 2000). Nonetheless, the absence of a research agenda specific to post-medieval burial was a crucial factor in the final outcome of the project. Ultimately the attempt to fully record all the material archaeologically meant that there was very little money left for full analysis and publication. At the time both I and other team members questioned whether or not it is reasonable to expect the developer (often a PCC) to pay for full analysis of such material and in particular the cost of long-term storage of the archive in a museum (Boyle & Keevill 1998, p. 94).

It is easy now to be highly critical of the project and indeed many were (for a clearer idea of prevailing views at the time, see Cox 1994; Faulkner 1994; Huggins 1994; Morris 1994; Parker Pearson 1995; Philp 1995). Ten years later a far greater controversy raged over the burial ground at St Pancras (see below).

3.3.3 St Bartholomew's Church, Penn, Wolverhampton

Oxford Archaeology carried out an evaluation of this churchyard in 1994 in advance of the construction of an extension which would impact on a substantial area of 720 square metres. On the basis of the evaluation it was estimated

that the proposed development area was likely to contain anything from 250-500 burials and an unknown number of burial vaults. Initially it was hoped that further work would comprise detailed excavation of the cemetery combined with similarly detailed osteological analysis. With this in mind the Oxford Archaeological Unit submitted a Written Scheme of Investigation in 1998. By this stage the Parochial Church Council had retained an archaeological consultant, so a very detailed WSI was written in response to a similarly detailed Archaeological Brief. The WSI had outlined a system of osteological recording which comprised both high and low resolution analysis of skeletal remains[3]. After much negotiation between all interested parties it became apparent that, primarily for financial reasons, the PCC was unable to proceed in this manner. Ultimately the work consisted of an archaeological watching brief combined with low resolution osteological recording. This took place entirely on site over an eight week period alongside a company of exhumation contractors. Two archaeologists were present, one of whom was responsible for osteological recording, while the other dealt with the recording of stratigraphy, coffins and associated fittings etc. This was supplemented by short periods spent on site by myself and regular meetings with the Archaeological Consultant. From the outset I had serious reservations about how the proposed methodology would actually work in practice, and what, if any, archaeological and osteological information might be retrieved. However, it was clear by this stage that the level of archaeological input which I had originally outlined was certainly not going to go ahead. My reservations led me to consider my original justification for detailed recording at great length (see Boyle 2004 for a detailed discussion). Perhaps most pertinently it was a condition of the Church of England Faculty that human remains, coffins and coffin fittings were not to be removed under any circumstance. A total of 368 contexts were assigned. The full range of possible remains was encountered. There were seven large brick built vaults, four brick-built single shaft vaults, 14 lead coffins, 131 wooden ones and the remaining 212 were buried in earth-cut graves, presumably originally in shrouds. A number of these may well be late medieval in date although no dating evidence was recovered. Contrary to initial expectations it *was* possible to recover useful and interesting information relating to the 18th- and 19th-century population of the town (Boyle 2004).

3.3.4 St Luke's Church, Old Street, Islington, London

In 2000 work at the Grade 1 listed Hawksmoor church took place in advance of construction and refurbishment work to provide new educational and rehearsal facilities for the London Symphony Orchestra. When work started the church was a disused roofless structure surrounded by a graveyard. Oxford Archaeology was employed to work as sub-contractors alongside Necropolis (a firm of undertakers and commercial exhumation operatives) for the duration of the work. Working conditions were difficult: it was extremely wet, leading to instability of sections in the graveyard; the structure of the disused church and crypt below was unstable and had to be supported (Bradley and Boyle, 2004).

The work comprised recording of funerary architecture, and the crypt structure along with exhumation of all the burials in the crypt and graveyard. A total of 1053 burials ranging in date from 1751-1880 were archaeologically recorded. Osteological analysis was largely undertaken on site and completed in Oxford. The skeletal sample of 896 was divided into high- and low-resolution samples (see above). The high resolution sample comprised 241 named individuals who were osteologically recorded in full. The remainder were unnamed individuals; for this group basic demographic information was recovered, stature was calculated where possible, a detailed dental record was compiled and pathology recorded where seen.

For reasons of decency the Church Diocesan Fund had stipulated that sealed coffins should not be opened but instead should be removed for reburial. The entire assemblage of individuals was reburied along with coffin remains and associated fittings at Leatherhead Cemetery in 2001.

The main aim of the archaeological work at St Luke's was to record and interpret as much detail as possible within the parameters of a relatively rapid exhumation and re-interment exercise (Boyle et al., 2005). It was believed that the archaeological data would contribute to the history and development of funeral trends and the demography of the population of the crypt. Specific objectives of the archaeological work included the recording of the preservation conditions within the crypt and churchyard, the inscriptions on coffin plates, with recording of the human remains and *limited* sampling of human skeletal remains with biographical data.

3.3.5 Royal Hospital, Greenwich, London

Archaeological works comprising evaluation, excavation and a series of watching briefs were carried out by Oxford Archaeology between July 1999 and September 2001 in advance of redevelopment. It was estimated that *circa* 20,000 retired seamen marines of the Royal Navy were interred in the Old Burial Ground between 1749 and 1856. A total of 107 skeletons were recovered from 55 graves within the proposed

footprint. As may be expected, the majority were older adult males, but a small number of women and adolescents were also present. The assemblage was remarkable for the wide range of pathological conditions, amputations and craniotomies. Interest in the social context of the Royal Navy is relatively recent and this assemblage is unique in being the only large group to undergo systematic osteological analysis. A brief report on a far smaller sample from the Royal Hospital Haslar, Gosport was recently published online (Shortland et al., 2008).

The Royal Hospital is rather unusual in the context of this paper in the sense that the project was a very 'traditional' one and followed standard procedures for excavation and recording followed by comprehensive publication. Exhumation contractors were not involved. The assemblage has not been reburied and has given rise to research projects on a variety of topics including cranial trauma and extra-masticatory wear (Boston et al., 2008, p. 152).

3.3.6 St George's Church, Bloomsbury, London

St George's church was designed by Hawksmoor and completed in 1731. The project was carried out during 2003 in advance of redevelopment of the crypt. In the first instance Oxford Archaeology were asked to carry out a desk based assessment with the aim of defining the archaeological resource and identifying its potential. The burial registers were consulted as part of this process and it immediately became apparent that no distinction had been made between those buried in the crypt and those buried in the parish graveyard. Furthermore, each of the vaults had been bricked up so at the commencement of work the likely number of burials was a complete unknown. Oxford Archaeology worked as a sub-contractor alongside Burial Ground Services (BGS, a professional exhumation company). Staff at OA had developed a good working relationship with BGS on previous projects (see above) and this was key to the success of the project at St George's Church.

The crypt contained 781 coffins found in seven vaults leading off the central chamber. The number of coffins within each of the seven vaults varied from 69 in vault 1 to as many as 139 in vault 7. All 781 coffins were triple-shelled, mostly comprising an upholstered wooden outer case over a lead shell which in turn covered an inner wooden coffin. All coffins and their associated fittings were recorded in full.

The names of 671 individuals were identified from the inscriptions on coffin plates and dated from 1804 to 1856 when the crypt was sealed. Unsurprisingly, documentary research on the named individuals confirmed that the burial population largely represented the wealthy

upper class residents of Bloomsbury. Osteological analysis (357 subadults and 157 adults) of 111 skeletons recovered from breeched lead coffins was undertaken on site as work progressed. A total of 72 named individuals were subjected to full osteological analysis while the remaining 39 skeletons received a lower level of analysis. With the benefit of hindsight I would now agree that the entire

assemblage should have been osteologically recorded in full. The same would apply to the assemblages from St Luke's, Islington and St Nicholas, Sevenoaks.

3.3.7 St Pancras Old Church Burial Ground

This project is referred to here because of the controversy that it provoked among the general public and the archaeological community. St Pancras Old Church is often credited with pre-Conquest origins, however, it wasn't until the 18th century that substantial enlargement of the churchyard took place (Emery, 2006). It saw very heavy use and was finally closed in 1854. Approximately 7000 burials were exhumed in the 1860s under the supervision of the writer and poet Thomas Hardy when the Midland Railway was constructed. A second partial clearance was required much more recently to make way for the new London terminus for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. Evaluation was not possible because the railway was operational both above and below ground. The burials were exhumed between February 2002 and June 2003 by Burial Ground Services while Gifford were appointed to carry out a watching brief in partnership with a field team from Pre-Construct Archaeology and specialists from the Museum of London.

From the outset, the archaeologists were working in what could only be described as extremely challenging circumstances due to extended working hours, poor lighting, access restrictions and availability of only limited space, all of which severely impacted recovery of archaeological data from a very intensively used cemetery. In order to mitigate these difficulties two small areas at the southern end of the cemetery were set aside for detailed archaeological recording, resulting in the controlled excavation of 83 skeletons combined with stratigraphic recording and definition of coffins. This attempt at compromise became unsustainable and for two days exhumation continued without archaeological monitoring. Amidst serious concerns raised by many interested parties including the Church of England, the Council for British Archaeology and Rescue, the process was halted and a new system of working was proposed. All excavation and lifting of human remains was to be carried out by exhumation operatives, there was to be no cleaning of coffins or their contents and archaeologists were to make their records from the trench edges. In response to the criticism from archaeologists that this would make creation of a meaningful record virtually impossible the system of working was again adjusted to allow for three-dimensional recording of coffins, which required the presence of archaeologists in the excavation area. This resulted in the recording of more than 1300 burials. The archaeological watching brief and the exhumation process

were made much easier by this workable methodology. It has been argued (Emery, 2006) that the project is an excellent example of the hard decisions that archaeologists must sometimes make within a large and fast-moving project and how a clear understanding at an early stage of exactly what information is required for meaningful analysis is crucial (e.g.

three-dimensional recording). A productive outcome was in part due to the clarity of the archaeologists during discussion with the developers about which aspects of recording were most important to them.

The recent weighty publication (Emery and Wooldridge, 2011) is a good illustration of how productive the outcome was. It focuses on the southernmost 'Third Ground', where 1383 burials were recorded archaeologically. Analysis included reconstruction of coffin stack sequences within known burial rows, innovatively illustrated in 3D. A sample of 715 burials were osteologically analysed in full. This is an important sample as it comes from a graveyard rather from a crypt. Analysis revealed a heterogeneous population buried during a time of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation. Preservation of human bone and coffins was exceptional, with inscribed coffin plates linking many burials with biographical detail. Identified individuals include refugees from the French Revolution, most notably three aristocrats and two prelates.

3.3.8 New Bunhills Burial Ground, Southwark, London

New Bunhills was a heavily-used private non-Conformist burial ground excavated by MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) in 2008 as part of the development of the new Globe Academy. Documentary references suggested that the burial ground was in use from *c* 1821 to 1853 with as many as 33,000 interments taking place (Miles with Connell, 2012, p. xi). A total of 827 wooden coffins were recorded archaeologically allowing comparison of the use of the burial ground, coffin furniture and burial finds with other contemporary cemeteries.

The sampling strategy involved the excavation of a trench measuring 22 m by 12 m which equated to *circa* 9.7% of the cemetery by area although the lower portions of the burial sequence were not excavated because of Health and Safety concerns, particularly over the preservation of soft tissue. The deepest stack comprised 14 coffins. The remainder of the threatened area was cleared by commercial exhumation contractors while archaeological excavation proceeded. A total of 767 skeletons were assessed and a sub-sample of 514 was selected for full osteological analysis. It is noteworthy that the original excavation brief stipulated the recovery of a sample of 500 skeletons after which archaeological excavation would cease (Miles with Connell, 2012, p. 2). However, during excavation this strategy was modified in order to provide a less biased sample and work continued to recover a larger number of skeletons for sub-sampling during osteological assessment. A larger sample was excavated specifically to avoid bias towards the sub-adult remains, which mainly lay uppermost and thus

were excavated first (2012, p. 60). A three-stage sample selection process was introduced during the on-site assessment phase. This comprised immediate reburial of skeletons which were poorly preserved or less than 60% complete (n=72) plus those with significant soft tissue surviving (n=91), followed by those which were less than 80% complete (n=90) leaving 514 skeletons which were fully analysed off-site. The authors commented:

> ‘In any burial ground analysis, targeting the more complete skeletons should ensure that maximum resources are focussed on material that will provide the most comprehensive and accurate data that can be correlated with other datasets.’ (Miles with Connell 2012, p. 62).

All burials were excavated individually, bagged and labelled. Each burial was allocated two separate context numbers, one for skeleton and one for coffin. Coffins were planned at 1:20 and levelled; skeletons were described and sketched. In other words the method of recording was standard with the proviso that,

> ‘As with the majority of post-medieval graveyards the grave cuts were not usually identifiable in the general graveyard soil, owing to the continual disturbance it underwent in use, but where they penetrated natural sand and gravels they were numbered, planned and described, although the full burial sequence was recorded only in limited areas of the site.’ (Miles with Connell 2012, p. 3).

3.4 Advisory Bodies, Guidelines and Research Agendas

This section considers advisory bodies in England, published guidelines and concludes with research agendas.

3.4.1 APABE (Advisory Panel on Archaeological Burial Grounds in England)

The origins of APABE lie in its previous incarnation as APACBE. The panel was set up in 2005 by English Heritage, the Church of England, and the Ministry of Justice. The function of the panel was to provide advice to professionals on the treatment of archaeological remains from Christian [*sic*] burial grounds. In 2009 English Heritage, the Church of England and the Ministry of Justice, as the three organisations with statutory responsibilities for archaeological burials in England, consulted on a proposal to wind up APACBE, and replace it with a new advisory panel covering *all* burials excavated from archaeological sites in England. The consultation responses received were overwhelmingly in support of this proposal. The new panel, the Advisory Panel on the Archaeology of Burials in England (APABE), held its inaugural meeting in 2010. The panel comprises professionals including archaeologists, osteologists and museum staff. With the exception of representatives from English Heritage, the Church of England and the Ministry of Justice, members are selected for their own personal background and experience

rather than as representatives of an organisation. The remit of the panel includes the provision of free casework advice on scientific, legal, ethical and other matters, to professionals who deal with archaeological human remains; support for those involved with human remains in interpreting relevant guidance documents (for example, DCMS, 2005; Mays, 2005) and the provision of new guidance where necessary. To date this includes a guidance note on the archaeology of

burial vaults (ADCA, 2010) and a policy paper on the destructive sampling of human remains (Mays et al., 2013). At the time of writing a guidance note on sampling large cemeteries (Mays et al., forthcoming) is going through a consultation process and will shortly be published. The guidance notes on the archaeology of burial vaults and sampling of large cemeteries are of great importance to the study of post-medieval burial and both are discussed in some detail below.

3.4.2 Archaeology of Burial Vaults (ADCA 2010)

While the existence and significance of medieval burial vaults is acknowledged, the ADCA guidance concentrates on vaults from the period *c* 1650 to 1900. There is now a general acceptance that in legal terms the archaeology of human remains begins 100 years before the present (Human Tissue Act, 2004; Human Tissue Act (Scotland), 2006). However, situations do quite regularly arise where remains less than 100 years old are encountered by archaeologists. Examples include the former Unitarian Chapel and burial ground at Swinton, Greater Manchester (Gibson 2014, pp. 15-16). Oxford Archaeology was involved in the exhumation of 325 burials, a project which was carried out in partnership with an exhumation company, Burial Ground Services. In accordance with the project brief, 205 were taken for immediate reburial either because they post-dated 1900 or living relatives had requested immediate reburial. The remainder were archaeologically excavated and full osteological recording is underway.

In contrast to earlier periods, for post-medieval human remains there are no well-developed archaeological research agendas (national or regional). The authors emphasise the fact that this is a separate sub-discipline of archaeology with specific difficulties and distinct research themes. Difficulties include emotional response, heightened sensitivities (due to the presence of named individuals and the recent date of remains) and hazardous working conditions (confined spaces, the weight of lead coffins and the preservation of soft tissue). These require detailed planning as early as possible, with risk assessments identified as a key element. The ADCA guidelines (2010) state plainly that awareness needs to be raised of the value of vault research, especially among custodians, so there is a presumption of access and analysis when opportunities arise and, equally, that archaeologists and historians need to be precise about likely outcomes and financial implications (ADCA 2010, 4).

There is a section on issues, legislation and good practice (ADCA 2010, 5). Of particular relevance is the reference to a reluctance on the

part of parishes or owners of private land to allow the opening of coffins which are still substantially intact, as it is seen as unnecessary and disrespectful. The authors advocate a clearly-staged programme of work backed by a justifiable research strategy which demonstrates to the developer that such work is in the public interest.

The section on archaeological excavation and recording of vaults is brief but useful. A key factor influencing the level of data recovery from vaults is who takes charge of the clearance (see St Pancras above). At best an exhumation contractor will make a record of nameplates, a rough location and number of coffins removed[4]. The process of removal will ultimately cause damage and the loss of valuable data (ADCA 2010, p. 6). The authors recommend that vault excavation should involve several kinds of archaeological recording, including:

–Documentary analysis of all available records relating to the vault prior to fieldwork
–Standing building recording of the vault (see English Heritage, 2006)
–Wooden coffin recording. These can be overlooked and are often fragile and damaged
–Lead coffin recording is the norm for most vaults, before re-interment unopened
–Burial shrouds, clothes and interior fittings of coffins are often recovered from split and damaged coffins in vaults and should also be recorded

Research priorities are defined under a range of headings and subheadings: use of vaults (peopling of vaults, historical demography, medical history, generalist history); human osteology (demography, social standing, living environment, industrialisation, disease and post-mortem practices, socio-economic status, scientific research) (ADCA 2010, pp. 7-10). Carefully considered research themes are needed to ensure that archaeological projects are tightly focussed and proportionate (2010, p.7).

3.4.3 Sampling Large Burial Grounds

At the time of writing a draft paper on sampling large burial grounds has been produced by members of APABE (Mays et al., forthcoming) and is going through a consultation process. All the information in this section derives from that document. The guidance note is primarily directed at those who will be involved with decision-making at any stage of a project where large numbers of burials are to be disinterred. It is designed to assist with establishing a suitable approach to their excavation in the context of their significance and the value of the information contained within them. The document is aimed at large burial grounds regardless of archaeological period. However, because most large burial grounds are post-medieval in date, this document is likely to be pertinent most often for post-medieval burial grounds. The

position taken in the guidance is that the study of post-medieval burial grounds is

potentially of no less value than the analysis of burials from earlier periods, and that the significance of large archaeological assemblages will often be multi-disciplinary and can be considerable.

In some post-medieval cemeteries the number of burials likely to be affected by development may be extremely large – in the order of tens of thousands. This begs the question of whether it is reasonable for the developer to pay for full excavation and analysis of every burial threatened or whether, instead, some sort of sampling strategy is justified. Although it is argued that the basic premise should be that all burials threatened by a development should be fully excavated and analysed, it is also acknowledged that costs and logistical difficulties may mean that sampling is appropriate in some cases (Mays et al., forthcoming, pp. 2-3). In general terms a large assemblage has greater research value than a small one and the value of the former is discussed in some detail (forthcoming, pp. 3-6).

Logistical and financial considerations are brought into sharp relief by the following statement:

> 'Calculating at 2014 rates, and using a generally accepted formula (Mays, 2005, p.44), post-excavation analysis of 15,000-20,000 well-preserved skeletons is likely to cost about £2 million, with excavation, publication and archiving costs on top of this. In addition, the excavation, study and long- or short-term storage of skeletal assemblages of this size pose significant logistical problems.' (Mays et al., forthcoming, p. 6).

Nonetheless, it is argued, and rightly, that such practicalities cannot be resolved by recording skeletons on site and rapidly reburying them as working conditions are inadequate, results cannot be checked and material is not available to future researchers. Rapid scanning is also inappropriate (see St Nicholas and St Luke's above) as all four fields of osteological data (skeletal inventory, demographic data, normal variation (metric and non-metric) and pathology data) are fundamental to an adequate osteological report (Mays et al., 2002). Those desiring to pursue a strategy whereby only a sub-sample of burials impacted by a development is excavated archaeologically and/or scientifically studied, need to justify it rigorously on a site by site basis (Mays et al., forthcoming, p.7). Projects should involve desk-based assessments and, if appropriate, evaluation at an early stage in the process.

The authors provide options for sampling which are summarised here. Sampling can be undertaken at the excavation stage (only a subset of the total burials impacted by the development are archaeologically excavated and recovered) or at the post-excavation phase (all burials affected by the development are archaeologically excavated but only a sub-sample are selected at the assessment phase for subsequent analysis). In some cases, a combination of both might be used. Both

have their advantages. If sampling occurs at the excavation stage, money will be saved and it is more efficient as all the burials excavated are likely to be analysed. One or more areas could be set aside for full archaeological excavation and recovery of remains, the rest being cleared by an exhumation company (St Pancras) but this can lead to problems

of interpretation (there may phasing or zoning by chronological phase). Burials could be selected during excavation according to archaeological factors or the preservation or completeness of remains. For example, only skeletons above some threshold of completeness (for example 25% of the skeleton present) could be selected for further processing and post-excavation study.

It is suggested that selection of burials at the post-excavation phase is more straightforward and often preferable because the stratigraphic sequence will have been established, the full size of the assemblage will be known, and one can readily select burials on the basis of preservation/completeness or archaeological interest. In this way an optimal sampling strategy can more easily be implemented than if one attempts to make sampling decisions on site. Such sampling can easily occur at the post-excavation assessment phase. The selection can be random (no bias but unable to target more osteologically or archaeologically-useful burials), based on osteological information content (preservation and completeness), or based on osteological features of interest (certain pathologies, demographic sub-groups). But selection by demographic subgroup would prevent analysis of the demographic profile of the population; selection according to the presence of pathologies would preclude epidemiological studies of disease frequency, and is not recommended); or selection according to archaeological aspects (such as date, phase, presence of coffin or vault). However, the latter will bias the sample towards the wealthier members of the population, while coffin plates are osteologically useful for testing techniques for determining sex, age at death and other aspects.

3.4.4 Research Agendas

It is beyond the scope of this brief review to consider research agendas for the study of post-medieval burial in detail so I will conclude with some brief comments on the wider significance of some elements of the resource under a number of sub-headings.

Funerary architecture

Gravestones are one of the most obvious categories of artefact relating to post-medieval funerary activity. Recent work (Tarlow, 1999; Mytum, 2002) has focussed on how shapes, iconography and text have changed over time. Some gravestones will remain *in situ* while others will have been moved during graveyard re-ordering so, for example, it cannot be assumed that an absence of above-ground memorials equates with the presence of poor parishioners who could not afford to purchase them.

Monuments can be linked to particular families and often provide information on place of residence, occupation and social position which it may in turn be possible to link with specific design preferences. Other significant funerary architecture includes table tombs, mort safes, mort houses and ledger stones.

Graveyard organisation and management

There is huge scope for discovering more about how different graveyards and crypts were organised and managed over time. Are there concentrations within certain areas of a graveyard, for example, children (this was demonstrated at New Bunhills), poorer parishioners, wealthier parishioners or evidence of family burial plots? Where coffin stacks are revealed do the stacks contain families or unrelated individuals? The vaults at St George's, Bloomsbury, demonstrated that the latter was often the case (Boston et al., 2009)

Coffin construction

The recording of coffins and their associated fittings can contribute to our understanding of the history and development of funeral trends. The team at Oxford Archaeology have been working on a typology of coffin fittings which draws on data from burial grounds and crypts from across the country. The recording of biographical data from coffinplate inscriptions can contribute to the understanding of the demography of a given population. Elements of coffin construction such as form, materials, motifs, decoration, fittings, pillows, mattresses and floral wreaths[5] can all be significant indicators of the social standing, beliefs and identity of an individual. The burial paraphernalia of the wealthy is far better understood than that of the less privileged.

Documentary research

There is huge scope for documentary research, both independent of and linked to osteological data. Inscriptions on gravestones and burial registers are obvious starting points, though undocumented interments are by no means unheard of.

History of medicine

A recent study of post-medieval burial devoted a chapter to the use of the dead for medical research (Cherryson et al., 2012). In the 18th and 19th centuries there was an increasing need for corpses that could be dissected by medical students, and this clearly relates to the history of the development of the medical profession. A named individual from St Luke's, Islington exhibited evidence for a malignant neoplasm and a horizontal craniotomy which had been performed at his death in 1842 (Boston et al., 2005, 180, 233, 251, pl. 5.2). He was not alone: a further three individuals had been subjected to autopsy for less obvious reasons. All four were buried within the crypt in lead-lined coffins and were unlikely to have been executed felons, nor would they have died on the parish in poverty. It is conceivable that their autopsies were

performed on the sly. The study of further hospital populations such as those from Greenwich (Boston et al., 2008), Haslar in Gosport (Shortland et al., 2008) and the Radcliffe Infirmary in

Oxford (Gibson 2014, p. 16) is to be strongly recommended. Assessment of the human remains from the Radcliffe Infirmary has identified evidence for medical intervention (for example, trepanation) and post-mortem investigation (for example, craniotomies) but virtually no evidence for anatomisation and dissection. The reason for this is not yet clear.

Social stratification and population movement

As I commented above, much of the work on post-medieval burial grounds has focussed on London and the south-east. So, unsurprisingly there has been limited work on working class populations outside of London. Funerary practices of the post-medieval period and particularly of the Industrial Revolution in the north of England are poorly understood (Brennand, 2006; 2007). More work on such burial groups could potentially provide information on the effects of rapid industrialisation leading to increased urbanisation and population growth combined with inadequate public health measures, poor air and water quality and dangerous working conditions. Further work is also requires on rural communities of the post-medieval period. It has been argued that well-documented post-medieval burial groups would make ideal test cases for the analyses of isotopes as indicators of geographical mobility (Henderson 2008, p. 41).

3.5 Final Thoughts

With the exception of some of the smaller post-medieval burial grounds (for example McCarthy et al., 2012) the vast majority of projects now involve some degree of partnership between professional archaeologists and commercial exhumation companies. This can make sense logistically. Oxford Archaeology has worked as a sub-contractor to an exhumation contractor on a number of projects. Such an arrangement can work successfully according to a detailed project brief with clearly defined working practices which are in place from the outset. This need for detailed project planning at a very early stage has recently been stressed by other authors (ADCA 2010, p. 10; Mays et al., forthcoming, p. 7).

Full recording and excavation of every substantial post-medieval burial ground and crypt is a desirable option but not a realistic one. The skeletal assemblage from St Nicholas was reburied in the churchyard, but the artefacts and paper archive remain in storage at Oxford Archaeology and the results of the work have never been fully published. A full report on St Luke's was produced, and while it was

never formally published it is available to download. All the skeletal material and the coffin furniture from both St Luke's and St George's have also been reburied. It has rightly been stated (ADCA, 2010, p. 6) that although a number of vaults have been 'dug', very few have made material available to osteologists and other researchers with some exceptions, for example, St Marylebone, Westminster (Miles et al., 2008).

Ecclesiastical authorities are likely to be firm in terms of specifying a timetable for reinterment, or at least imposing stringent conditions for long-term curation elsewhere (ADCA, 2010, p. 5). The latter has clear financial implications. It is debatable whether the kind of development carried out at St Nicholas would now take place. Within the Faculty system used by the Church of England, any changes to the consecrated space of a church and its churchyard require a Statement of Significance to be prepared (Mays et al., forthcoming, p. 1). The potential loss of significance needs to be carefully balanced against the social and economic benefits of development.

The paragraph below which refers specifically to post-medieval vaults is equally applicable to post-medieval burial grounds and is a fitting conclusion to this brief personal review.

> 'Vaults and their contents represent a key component of community heritage; they are the repository of former human beings, former parishioners; they are part of the extant places of worship, and they are significant historical, demographic and archaeological resources capable of making very real additions to our knowledge of past cultural, religious and demographic experience. If there is an overriding reason to empty them [vaults] of their contents, it is important to plan a coherent, meaningful and proportionate response to this to help preserve the knowledge and heritage and other significance for current and future generations. This can be done sensitively and without overwhelming cost through good forward planning and fully justified objectives.' (ADCA, 2010, p. 10).

Huge advances have been made in the field of post-medieval burial archaeology over the last 30 years. I would certainly approach each of the projects I was involved with in a very different way now and I would like to think that I have a clearer understanding of the potential of the resource and the most beneficial archaeological approaches. The recently published guidance (ADCA, 2010) and the soon-to-be published guidance (Mays et al., forthcoming) will make an invaluable contribution to our approaches in the future.

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1 BABAO was set up in 1999. The organisation promotes the study of biological anthropology for the purpose of understanding humanity from the past to the present. It also provides a forum for discussion and intellectual exchange for professionals and students in all areas of biological anthropology, http://www.babao.org.uk/.

2 The *Textus Roffensis* is a medieval manuscript which contains among other things, two pre-Con-quest and pre-Domesday Book lists of Kent parishes and copies of the earliest English law codes to survive. http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/

3 The high-resolution sample consisted of named individuals and those with unusual pathology, evidence of surgical or dental intervention and exceptionally good preservation. Low-resolution skeletal recording included a skeletal and dental inventory, age and sex assessments, gross pathological observations, and basic metrical recording for use in the determination of stature and sex. The high-resolution sample was subject to the same recording criteria with the addition of detailed descriptions of pathological manifestations and differential diagnosis, additional metrical recording, and a study of non-metric traits.

4 At St Bartholomew's, St Luke's and St George's preliminary discussion allowed for the clear definition of a working system whereby the requirements of both the archaeologists and the exhumation contractors could be accommodated.

5 Floral tributes in the form of wreaths along with herbs including lavender and rosemary were found within coffins at St Nicholas, Sevenoaks.

Isabelle Souquet-Leroy, Hélène Réveillas and Dominique Castex

4 The Impact of Epidemics on Funerary Practices in Modern France (16th – 18th Centuries)

Throughout the course of the modern period, the populations of the kingdom of France were confronted with recurrent epidemics. Today, the reaction of these populations to events of excess mortality is better known through the study of texts, but also through field excavations and laboratory research of funerary complexes recording these crisis episodes. Considering twelve archaeological examples of cemeteries in France, this chapter analyses the different reactions of populations facing an epidemic and explores the potential of funerary practices between the 16th and 18th centuries.

4.1 Mortality during the Modern Period

The following section looks at the range of typical mortality regimes found in medieval and early modern France, contrasting so-called 'ordinary mortality' with the evidence from the Ancien Régime with frequent crises of extraordinary mortality rates suggestive of epidemic illness, as well as famine or war. These are discussed in detail in relation to five excavated sites with human remains.

4.1.1 Ordinary Mortality

> 'People died very young and they died old, but they did not die young' (Dupâquier, 1988: 237).

The populations of the Ancien Régime[1], referred to as pre-jennerian[2] (Bocquet & Masset, 1977), were subject to environmental factors (surroundings, climate...) and sanitary conditions (hygiene, illnesses...) which at times influenced mortality more than social ranking. Nearly one person out of two died before his/her 20th birthday, and half of those died before the end of their first year. This high rate of infant

mortality is partly due to the number of deaths before the end of the first week of life (Séguy & Signoli, 2008), or even after several hours (Lalou, 1990). In a society where birth rates were high, it was not rare for families to be affected by the death of a newborn. These deaths were as much due to biological factors as to social behaviour such as inexperienced mid-wives, or sending the baby to a wet nurse[3]. After maturity, individuals had a life expectancy of 40 years. In addition to the illnesses which affected all ages and both sexes of the population, female mortality was linked to childbirth, even though this percentage appears derisory (between 1% and 2%) like male mortality mainly caused by accidents (Dupâquier, 1988). The effect of social differentiation is perceptible for infants over a year old and in adults, for whom association with a privileged background was responsible for non-negligible mortality differences. Better nutrition and improved hygiene resulted in longer life expectancy. However, epidemics, famines[4] and wars could transform death into a mortality crisis.

4.1.2 Extraordinary Mortality

Mortality crises are characteristic of the Ancien Régime. They span the whole of the modern period, and recur on average every 10 to 15 years (Delumeau & Lequin, 1987; Hildersheimer, 1993). In addition to wars, famines and natural catastrophes, epidemics regularly triggered an increase in mortality. An epidemic is characterized by the rapid spread of an infectious illness to a large number of people, generally by direct contagion. In several months, or even in several weeks, the number of deaths could be multiplied by five, and could halve the population of a town or a village. The plague is undoubtedly the main epidemic illness of the Ancien Régime, as shown by the various surgical treaties dating from the end of the 15th century onwards[5]. It is

often called ‘contagion’ by the doctors of this period. But it is not the only one: some of the illnesses from the Middle Ages continued to decimate populations, such as smallpox, tuberculosis[6], typhoid fever or dysentery, whereas new illnesses appeared, such as typhus, sweating sickness or syphilis (Dupâquier, 1988, I, pp. 436-462 and II, pp. 243-252).

The intensity of these phenomena of “mass” death was exceptional and could attain several hundred deaths per day (the Marseille plague in 1722, typhus in 1712 at Douai: see Marchal, 2002; Nguyen-Hieu et al., 2010). This led to a modification of funerary practices, whereby instead of single burials of prepared corpses, which were either wrapped in a shroud[7] and enclosed in a coffin according to a liturgical codified ritual, several corpses were buried directly in a pit, at times without any preparation[8] and without any receptacle.

Historians specialized in the study of the dead, either in the Middle Ages or in the modern period, underline the traditional dissimulation ritual of the corpse: wrapping it in a shroud and/or concealing it in a coffin from the 9th century onwards (Alexandre-Bidon, 1993, p. 197; Ariès, 2014, p. 169; Vovelle, 1983, p. 333). In a society where death is hidden, the multiplication of deaths threatens the established ritual and requires the implementation of practices aiming to maintain some kind of stability.

The identification of a multiple burial is based on taphonomic observations which take account of the evolution of anatomical connections from the deposition to the discovery of the corpse. When several corpses are deposited simultaneously, they decompose at the same time and the joints of each skeleton are thus maintained (Duday, 2005). In the present state of knowledge, it is not possible to advance the hypothesis of a crisis episode without these multiple structures (Duday, 2007), except in specific cases where sites are well-referenced by manuscripts. Given the expanse

and the density of urban cemeteries, it is not always possible to identify these specific episodes, even though we strongly suspect that individual burials could be ascribed to such events.

The study of the population composition by age and gender enables us to assess any possible selection. Infectious illnesses, which are lethal in the short term, often leave a specific demographic signature, i.e., they do not affect the same ages of the population. Some affect mostly children (measles, for example), whereas others generally kill adolescents and young adults (like the plague, which is not discriminatory). Overall, the profile of a population affected by an epidemic no longer resembles that of a natural population, and the study of the composition of an archaeological series by age and by gender can therefore lead to the identification of the type of epidemic (Castex, 2005). However, in the absence of historic sources, it is not easy to determine the cause of death in cases of epidemics. Death often intervenes very rapidly, before infectious agents have time to cause any characteristic bone lesions. However, it is now possible to identify certain pathogenic agents through molecular palaeobiochemical analyses (Biagini et al., 2012; Bianucci et al., 2009; Bizot et al., 2005; Haensch et al., 2010).

We propose the identification of an episode of mortality crisis from the examples presented below, based on three non-dissociable points: firstly, the presence of several contemporaneous multiple burials (simultaneity of the deposits, contemporaneity of the structures and recurrence of the phenomenon); secondly, the non-natural dispersal of population age groups, and thirdly, a possible similar cause of death. An isolated multiple grave is not sufficient to characterize a crisis phenomenon. It can, for example, be the result of an accident without any incidence on the composition of the population. In any case, it is more relevant to analyse a crisis of mortality from large population samples.

4.2 Documented Sites

The five sites presented here have all been subject to comprehensive studies, from the point of view of both funerary practices and biological data. Inter-site comparisons and a first overview were established with the available information for each site.

4.2.1 Fédons Cemetery at Lambesc (Gard)

During the course of the plague in 1590 in Provence, an infirmary was installed in the hamlet of Fédons, just outside the town of Lambesc, in the southeast of France, in order to wipe out the contagion in the region (Fig. 4.1). The archives of Provence, and reports written in 1590-1591, have permitted the location of places where patients were housed, and of the cemetery; and allowed us to make connections with the Fédons

cemetery excavations (Rigaud, 2005). Seventy-five individual and 26 multiple burials (one quadruple, four triple and 21 double) were brought to light, representing a total of 133 individuals. The tombs are spread over 18 rows from east to west and six from the north to the south.

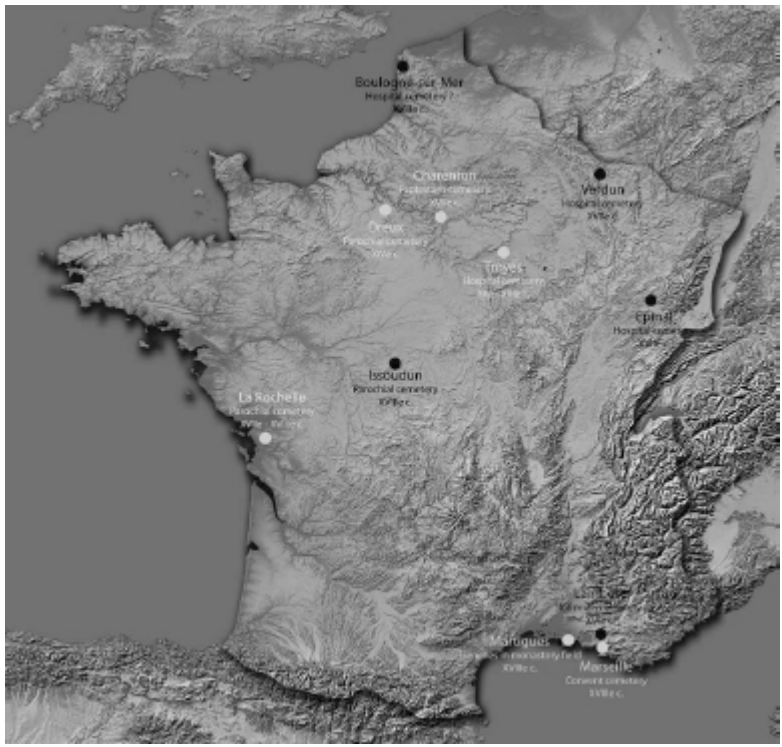


Figure 4.1: Map showing location of sites named in the text (in black, studied sites, in grey, sites of comparison).

The dimensions of the pits are variable, depending on the age of the deceased and the number of individuals buried there (Fig. 4.2). The analysis of the burials showed that the deceased were systematically buried in open ground, for both individual and multiple graves. The deceased are always lying on their backs, with their heads towards the east, regardless of whether they are adults or children. The upper limbs are bent with the hands in front of the upper body and the lower limbs are stretched out more or less close to each other. Only a few cases (four out of 133 individuals) attest to the use of a shroud. Several small objects were discovered (about 60 for 36 individuals), most of which are directly related to clothing, and others to decorative elements or small everyday objects (Moreau et al., 2005). Written sources and a predominance of teenagers and young adults support the hypothesis of an epidemic crisis, substantiated by molecular paleobiochemical analyses which identified the *Yersina pestis* bacillus.

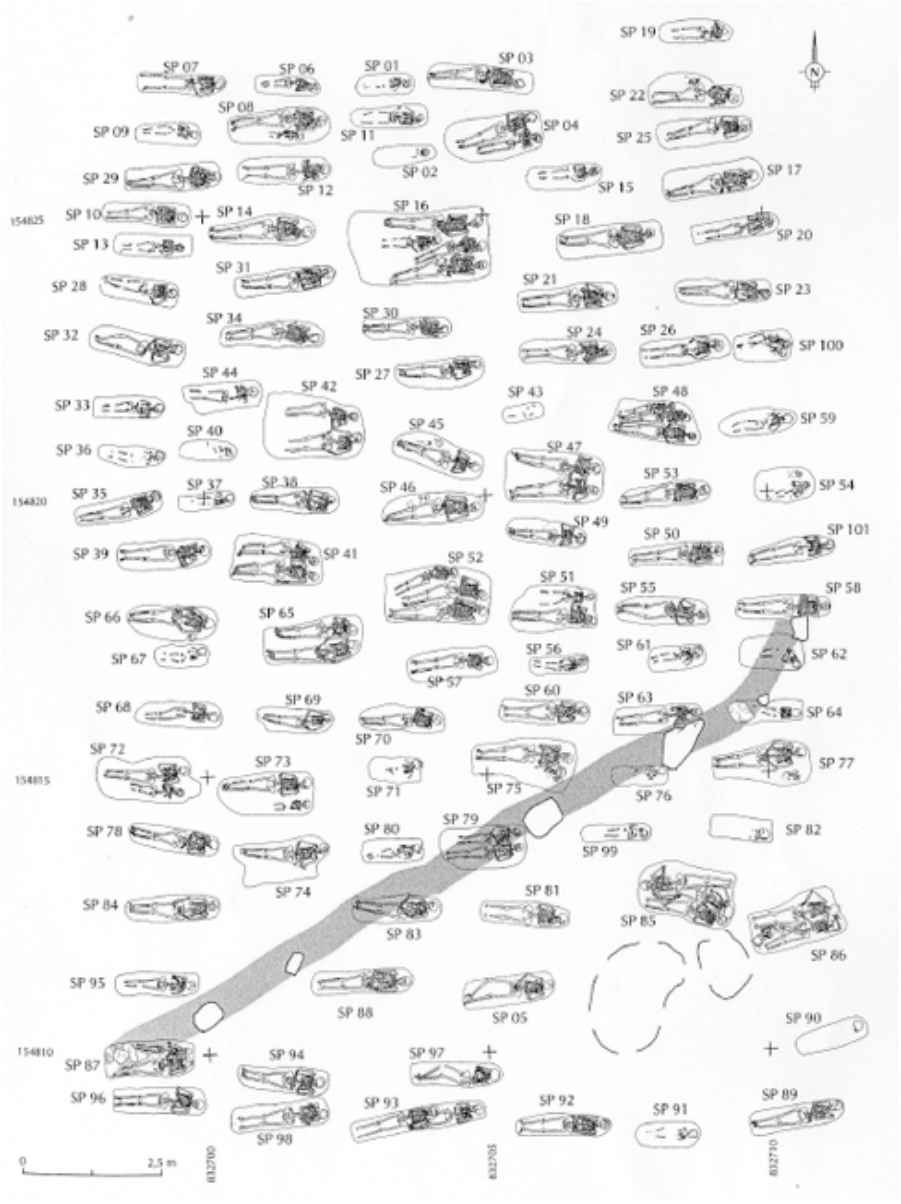


Figure 4.2: General plan of the cemetery of 'Les Fédons' (Lambesc). Map AFAN (in Bizot et al. 2005).

4.2.2 The Cemetery at Saint Catherine's Hospice at Verdun (Meuse)

The town of Verdun is located in the northeast of France, in Lorraine (Fig. 4.1). A rescue excavation conducted by the Association pour les Fouilles Archéologiques Nationales (AFAN) during the winter of 1998-1999 and the spring of 1999, directed by P. Kuchler, brought to light the remains of the Saint Catherine Hospice, the neighbouring parish church Saint-Sauveur and their respective cemeteries. The hospice cemetery was established during the course of the 17th century in the gardens situated beside Saint Catherine's Chapel. It was only used for a short time as new buildings were erected there in 1715 (Kuchler, 1999). Seventy-eight individuals were discovered in 15 individual and six multiple graves, including two double graves, one triple and one quadruple. The two other funerary structures (158 and 161) are much bigger, with 21 and 26 skeletons, including 18 immature individuals and 29 adults of both sexes (Réveillas, 2010). They are very close to each other and present the same rectangular plan. They are included in the funerary zone in the same way as the individual graves.

It is difficult to advance hypotheses as to the event behind the two double graves, the triple grave and the quadruple grave, given the small numbers of corpses. At most, we can observe the absence of traumatic lesions following a violent episode, such as a combat, a massacre or an accident. On the other hand, food poisoning or an infectious illness could be envisaged, although it is impossible to prove. If we focus on the two large graves, specific lesions resulting from inter-human violence can be observed on three individuals, but in all but one case, they are in the process of healing, and none of the 44 other individuals presents any signs of injury. Injuries thus remain limited and do not seem to be imputable to an act of war. Moreover, the mortality profile and the distribution of individuals by sex does not correspond to the usual war time mortality profile, i.e., made up of mainly male, rather young soldiers, such as the site of Vilnius (Lithuania) where large pits were discovered with individuals died during Napoleonic war. The demographic composition with sex and age data, reveal a characteristic military population (Signoli et al., 2004). On the other hand, an epidemic could explain this excessive mortality. Several illnesses developed as epidemics during the modern epoch in Lorraine (Cleu, 1914). The composition by age and sex of the sample, with an over-representation of individuals aged from 5 to 14 years, implies that mortality may be due to illnesses such as dysentery, typhoid fever, flu or

sweating sickness, an illness which appeared in the 15th century but for which we have little data as to the mode of propagation and impact on populations (Réveillas, 2010).

All the skeletons buried in the two multiple tombs are in contact with each other and are globally in good anatomic connection. No dislocation of the joints was caused by the successive deposition of the corpses and the only movements observed are limited to the interior volume of the corpse, which can be attributed to gravity with the creation of secondary empty spaces during the decomposition of underlying individuals. The presence of a rigid receptacle, such as a coffin or paving can be

ruled out and the position of certain corpses points to the possibility that they were wrapped in a shroud or clothing. This hypothesis is backed up by the discovery of several pins in copper or iron alloys as well as the identification of a scrap of fabric. Most of the individuals were lying on their backs, with two exceptions; one was lying on its right side, in tomb 161, the other on its stomach, in grave 158. The latter is the last corpse to be deposited in the pit. The corpses were laid out following a west/east or even a southwest/northeast orientation, with the exception of the corpse lying on its stomach in grave 158, with its head facing northeast. The upper limbs of most of the bodies buried in these graves are in a raised position and/or crossed. None of them has both arms along the body, but they cannot all be observed due to the state of conservation.



Figure 4.3: Mass grave in Verdun. Photo AFAN.

The lower limbs display more varied positions, as out of 35 observable cases, at least six have one leg bent to the side (Fig. 4.3). There is no difference in the treatment of the corpses according to age or sex. However, it is interesting to note that the younger individuals are often deposited in the vacant spaces left by larger corpses. Small objects have been found with rosary beads, several religious medals and unidentified metallic elements (Kuchler, 1999). It was not possible to attribute these objects to any particular individual.

4.2.3 The Hospital Cemetery of the Hospitaliers of Saint John of Jerusalem at Epinal

Like Verdun, Epinal is a town in the northeast of France in the region of Lorraine (Fig. 4.1). In the spring of 2000, the excavation of Rue Saint-Michel, led by A. Masquilier, archaeologist with Institut National de Recherches Archéologiques Préventives (INRAP), led to the discovery of remains of an establishment of the Hospitaliers of Saint John of Jerusalem and in particular of the associated cemetery. Two occupation periods were identified, the first related to the Middle Ages and the second to the modern period (Masquilier, 2001). The latter contained four multiple graves, three of which were excavated. They yielded four, five and six individuals, and given the size of the tombs, an estimate of at least twenty buried individuals appears to be accurate. Altogether, 10 adults and five immature subjects were brought to light. The rather low number of individuals and the fact that we are dealing with truncated tombs means that we must remain cautious as to the composition of the population by age and sex. Moreover, none of the corpses present traumatic lesions imputable to an act of war (combat or massacre), which is why it is conceivable that this mortality crisis is due to an epidemic, which may or may not have been accompanied by a famine. As mentioned for Verdun, Lorraine experienced numerous epidemics during the modern period.

The corpses are in contact with each other and do not present signs of having being moved significantly from their general layout. The position of certain individuals implies that cloth shrouds may have been used, as does the presence of silver or copper alloy pins. All the corpses were buried on their backs with their arms folded and their legs stretched out. The graves do not display any particular organization in terms of age or sex. On the other hand, orientation is not the same in all cases; in each tomb the corpses have been deposited head to toe in order to optimize the available space. In this way, in grave 101 for example, the first two buried individuals were deposited with their heads towards the northwest, the third with the head southwest, the fourth northwest and the last two were deposited with their heads facing southwest and southeast (Fig. 4.4). Several small objects were found, such as a copper alloy coin, and bone beads, a cross and glass bead elements.

4.2.4 The Cemetery on the Island of Saint Louis in Boulogne-sur-Mer

Boulogne-sur-Mer is a town in the north of France (Fig. 4.1). In November 1994, during the rescue excavation directed by the town archaeologists E. Belot and V. Canut, remains from the modern period were discovered on the Ilot Saint-Louis. At the south-southwestern tip of the excavated sector, a funerary zone comprising seven multiple graves, with a total of 39 individuals was brought to light. Stratigraphic evidence dates these tombs, each of which contains between three and seven individuals, to the beginning of the 18th century (Fig. 4.5).



Figure 4.4: Mass grave in Epina. Photo INRAP.



Figure 4.5: Mass graves in Boulogne-sur-Mer. Photo Service Municipal d'Archéologie de Boulogne-sur-Mer.

These graves are located in the gardens of the general hospital of the town, at a considerable distance from the "official" hospital cemetery and no links have yet been established with the latter, due to the absence of an archival study. The simultaneity of the bone deposits associated with the contemporaneity of the different recurring structures lead us to interpret this site as the result of a brutal mortality crisis (Castex & Réveillas, 2007; Réveillas 2005). On the basis of archaeological and historical arguments, we have eliminated the hypothesis of a belligerent episode in favour of an epidemic. The distribution of sexes is balanced (10 men and 9 women) and the number of adults is almost identical to the number of youths and children (18). In the light of historical, medical and demographic sources, these facts rule out certain epidemics. Smallpox is the only promising avenue of research although other, poorly documented yet recurring illnesses during the period under consideration cannot be totally excluded.

The persistence of numerous anatomical connections points to the primary nature of the deposits. The systematic connection of the most labile joints demonstrates a process of the progressive filling in of the space freed during the decomposition of corpses and thus characterizes a filled-in space. All the individuals were buried on their backs, along a southwest/northeast axis, juxtaposed and/or superposed in the same way, with the head towards the southwest. The lower limbs are nearly always stretched out and the upper limbs are frequently folded. No particular organization emerged according to age or sex, and young individuals were indifferently placed above or below adults. The only constant factor is the simultaneous presence of adults and children under ten years old. Nonetheless, it appears to be a relatively ordered organization, as in the majority of cases, the youngest individuals seem to have been placed in vacant spaces left after the deposition of the first adults. Three graves contained small objects including coins, a ring and non-identified metal objects. In all the tombs, several skulls presented traces of oxidation which could be linked to iron remains with a non-identified function.

4.2.5 The Parish Cemetery at Issoudun (Indre)

An excavation of a vast 11th to 18th century parish cemetery at Issoudun (Fig. 4.1), carried out by the INRAP in 2002, revealed the presence of 14 multiple graves clustered together in the same sector (Fig. 4.6). They contain between 2 and 23 individuals and are spread out over two distinct chronological episodes. The first is represented by twelve pits oriented northeast/southwest and organized into five rows. They contain

at least 168 individuals. The second episode is represented by two pits perpendicular to the former, i.e., along a north-northwest/south-southeast axis. They contain at least 33 individuals. Altogether, 201 individuals were buried in these pits. The organization of these structures reveals that the gravediggers tried to conserve some of the usual funerary rites with the organization of the pits in rows and excavations with similar dimensions to the surrounding individual pits.



Figure 4.6: Six mass graves in Issoudun. Photo INRAP.

The pits are rectangular and all display similar dimensions, regardless of the number of buried individuals or the burial phase. The corpses were placed on their backs, head to toe. The deposits are organized to make optimal use of the available space. The bodies are laid out according to size, and consequently, according to age. In parallel, the smallest individuals are distributed in the empty spaces between corpses. In the pits related to the first crisis episode, the largest individuals (adults and large teenagers) were deposited in two rows, head to toe at the base. Then, smaller corpses were deposited in the upper levels. Conversely, during the second crisis, the youngest individuals were placed at the base of the pit and then covered by older bodies.

The absence of traumatic lesions on the bones of the buried cadavers rules out the hypothesis of an act of war and again implies that two epidemic episodes occurred. From a demographic point of view, several age and gender facts indicate a non-natural recruitment. We observe a clear predominance of males with very marked anomalies compared to a natural population, such as the under-representation of children under one year old and the over-representation of children aged between 5 and 9, and especially between 10 and 14, as well as the clear over-representation of young adults.

4.3 Overview of Funerary Practices

The number of skeletons in the graves associated with a mortality crisis is rather variable at the different sites. At Epinal, due to the intersection of tombs by posterior structures, it is not possible to determine the number of corpses buried there, although there appear to be at least 20 bodies. At Boulogne-sur-Mer, there are 39 skeletons, 47 at Verdun, 75 at Fédons and 201 at Issoudun. In spite of these disparate figures, similarities emerge with regard to the treatment of the dead. Everywhere, they were directly laid in the open ground without a container. The presence of pins and scraps of cloth at Fédons, Epinal, Issoudun and Verdun and the position of certain skeletons at these four sites implies that the corpses were wrapped in a shroud, but due to the restricted number of such remains, it is not possible to extrapolate to all the burials. The majority of the bodies were laid on their backs, the arms were often folded and the legs stretched out. Orientation is more variable and often seems to be related to a will to enhance the use of space in the pit. In the narrow (1m wide at most) multiple graves at Issoudun and Epinal, the corpses are often placed head to toe and alternate according to the different levels. This is not the case in Boulogne, where the width of the pits is limited but the intermediary levels of skeletons are often made up of children. At Verdun, in the wider structures (1.3m and 1.8m), the heads of the individuals are all generally facing west, apart from one body. It is interesting to note that the heads of the subjects buried at Fédons are generally facing east, which is out of keeping with Christian customs, whereas this space is described as a graveyard in written sources. It does not seem as though topographic constraints governed this choice. Small objects, such as coins or religious elements (pilgrimage medals, rosary beads) in bone or in metal are present everywhere in variable proportions. The ritual of depositing objects in the tomb had generally disappeared since the Early Middle Ages and resurfaced during the modern period. In the cemetery of the parish of Saint-Sauveur at Verdun, dated to the end of the 16th century and later, personal objects were brought to light (jewellery, rosary beads and so forth: Kuchler, 1999). These elements are similar to those found in the multiple graves in the nearby cemetery at Saint Catherine's hospice, but also in other tombs dated to the modern period, in Alsace for example (Collectif, 2010).

In Verdun and Epinal, the multiple tombs are situated beside individual graves in a sector which is not reserved for them. They are surrounded, and even intersected by individual graves, aligned with observable construction elements and located towards the edge of the

funerary zone. At Issoudun, the multiple graves are clustered together and arranged in rows and have replaced individual graves in a sector reserved for periods of high mortality. The funerary zone brought to light in Boulogne-sur-Mer contains only multiple graves, and in the absence of further information it is difficult to refer to it as a cemetery. The site of Fédons is unusual as it is a cemetery created during the resurgence of the plague. It seems to have been organized according to a precise order of progression. The pits present a generally homogeneous format; some

of them appear to be undersized or oversized in relation to the buried individual, which seem to be related to a grave digging programme. Moreover, the relatively constant depth of the graves attests to a scrupulously respected burial code.

The number of bodies buried in each pit is an essential element for bringing to light a crisis episode. Although the presence of several multiple graves is required in order to advance the hypothesis of an epidemic, the variability of the number of bodies in each burial is difficult to explain and considerable inter- and intra-site differences exist. These burials could represent the number of deaths per day, as suggested for the Issoudun burials, where the number of bodies per pit is very similar to the number of deaths per day recorded in the parish registers for the first two weeks of September 1709. On the other hand, the organization of the graves in Fédons cemetery with a majority of individual burials indicates a simpler and more "ordinary" management of the dead. Apart from the six multiple burials, nothing points towards an epidemic nature of this funerary site. The location of this site in a rural environment probably explains this type of organization, with fewer sick people and thus fewer deaths to attend to and more space in a graveyard created especially for this epidemic. In Verdun, Epinal or Boulogne-sur-Mer, the variable number of bodies in each pit reveals an organization that we cannot elucidate since it is dependent on diverse factors (the burden of the weight, the availability of gravediggers, the epidemic impact, geographic context and the institution responsible for the sick, for example).

The multiplication of the discovery of multiple graves associated with epidemic mortality crises enhances our knowledge of the management of cadavers during these troubled times. It is still difficult to conduct an overview of the subject due to the absence of a certain amount of data such as the exact nature of the crisis in certain cases and the impact of variations in epidemic peak, but today it seems that we can identify the recurrence of a certain number of practices during the burial of epidemic victims. Up until the beginning of the 18th century, a rigorous organization of deposits is observed, particularly for the layout of immature individuals as opposed to adults. The orientation of young children appears to be more variable and is at times dependent on the number of individuals in the tomb. The deposition of corpses to fill in spaces seems to be constant, which differentiates these graves from those of 'classic' mortality periods. The graves are implanted in a pre-existing cemetery and always respect the prevailing organization. They are inserted into a schema of rows in Issoudun, even though they are concentrated in the same sector. At Boulogne, the layout is somewhat different as the pits are not in the hospital cemetery, but outside where there was more space available.

These similarities between sites during the modern period, can in fact be detected from the Middle Ages onwards (Kacki & Castex, 2012). Certain sites display the same rigour as regards the funerary treatment of epidemic victims. In Troyes, for example, seven multiple graves have been discovered presenting marked similarities with those from Verdun, as far as the shape and size of the pits are concerned (Réveillas, 2010, Réveillas & Castex, 2010). The radiocarbon dates showed a considerable gap

between two of these graves, implying that two phases existed for this site; the first from the 11th until the first half of the 12th century, and the second from the end of the 12th century to the first half of the 13th century. The age and sex composition and the absence of traces of violence imply that these two events were linked to mortality crises resulting from epidemics, which may or may not have been associated with a famine. The pathogen responsible for this excess mortality event has not yet been identified with certitude, but the chronology, age and sex distributions and the current epidemiological data tend to favour certain causes such as typhoid fever or dysentery, or even influenza. The orientation of the corpses in the tombs at Troyes is variable in the different levels, but all of them, with the exception of one child lying on its right side, were deposited on their backs. The deceased were carefully placed in the pit and variations in orientation can be imputed, once again, to the optimization of space.

This is also the case for the site of Dreux (Castex, 1994) where 23 graves comprising 14 individual and nine multiple graves (making up a total of 72 individuals) were discovered. The multiple graves contain two and 22 bodies (adults and children together). According to radiocarbon dates, this part of the cemetery dates from the second half of the 14th century. Again, corpses were buried directly in the ground, with no evidence of shrouds or coffins. Inside the pits, adults were deposited first, then younger individuals were placed in the vacant spaces or on adults.

A last medieval example reveals similarities with the Fédons Cemetery. During the course of excavations of the Hospitaliers cemetery of Saint John of Jerusalem at La Rochelle (Nibodeau, 2011), an alignment of five multiple graves containing between two and four individuals was identified in levels dating to the end of the Middle Ages. The management of the deceased is very similar to that observed at Fédons. It is possible that the individual graves from the epidemic event were not identified as such in this urban cemetery. As at Fédons, the corpses were deposited side by side, following the same alignment as earlier burials.

Conversely, three sites in the southeast of France, associated with the last plague epidemic in 1720 and 1721, show a very different treatment of the deceased, radically opposed to the schema described above (Signoli, 2006). The deposits do not present a rigorously organized aspect but instead portray an image of ‘dumped bodies’. At the sites of Capucins in Ferrières, Délos in Martigues and the convent of Observance in Marseille, the dead were not buried in pits with the same dimensions as graves but rather in trenches dug outside funerary zones. In Martigues, the sites have respectively yielded five trenches containing 210 skeletons and three trenches enclosing the remains of 39 bodies. In Marseille, 216 skeletons were discovered in a vast pit. In these burials, the positions of

the deceased (on the back with open arms and legs apart; in fetal position; on the stomach; arms up above the head) and the orientation of the bodies do not point to the organization of the deposits (Tzortzis & Rigeade, 2008; 2009; Tzortzis & Signoli, 2009). Scraps of cloth and leather were found, probably indicating that some of the corpses were dressed, and lime was used in the pits at Délos. All the gestures brought to light show that the corpses were deposited quickly and hastily,

in structures which probably remained open for several days. They were not handled in such a way as to optimize the use of space, as the vast dimensions of the trenches did not require any particular organization. The mortuary practices observed at these Provencal sites are totally different from the others, including Fédons, which shows the ravages of the plague a century earlier. It is interesting to note that reactions to the plague not only attest to the dangerous nature of the illness, with an image of panic at the sites of Marseille and Martigues, but also to measures of prevention, such as the geographical remoteness of burial sites (as at Fédons).

4.4 The Transmission of Illnesses

Before the first quarter of the 13th century, the observed funerary rites and practices do not display any evidence of urgency or panic. It seems as though populations did not consider that there was any sanitary risk during the course of the events causing death despite their frequency. Analysis of the types of depositions confirms that the processes were effective, well thought out and included close proximity during the handling of bodies for burial. Apparently, the population did not seem to fear possible contagion, or overcame such fear during the funeral. They may have recognized the cause of death and known that there was no risk of contagion or propagation, or have been unaware of the cause of death or any risks involved. They adapted their gestures to the immediate circumstances.

We know very little of the reactions of populations to epidemic illnesses such as diphtheria, typhoid, dysentery, measles or even smallpox, and it is difficult to discern just how much early populations knew of these illnesses. Thus, it is possible that the symptoms of certain illnesses remained unidentified and populations were not aware of the lethal nature of diseases, resulting in non-urgent action (multiple burials being the simplest reaction to multiple deaths). In the same way, an illness which only affected certain age classes (the youngest for example) probably did not result in the vigilance of the whole population. The sites where the cause of death is unknown, such as Issoudun or Boulogne-sur-Mer, could belong to this category of event. In all probability, other well-identified illnesses, such as syphilis or leprosy, which caused a horrible, but slow death, did not give rise to a reaction of panic.

The case of plague is different as it is sudden, rapid, uncontrollable and unexplained, yet identified by the populations it decimated. Due to the endemic state of the plague since the end of the Middle Ages, populations knew the symptoms of the illness[9] and the extreme danger

it presented: it resulted in the death of up to 80% of

cases for the bubonic form and 100% for pulmonary cases (Biraben, 1975-1976; Signoli et al., 2002).

From this period onwards, preventive measures were introduced to wipe out infestations, to mixed effect. Quarantine has always been a response to the fear and shame of epidemics in the absence of more effective medical solutions[10]. Initially, people avoided contact with those affected by skin diseases such as leprosy, as 'the alleged contagion was perceived as both a physical and moral contamination' (Fabre, 1996). This model also served for the prophylaxis of the plague. Those struck by the plague were often isolated in places which had been used in the past to quarantine lepers (leper houses or maladreries), and burial grounds were often similar for both illnesses (Hillairet, 1958, p. 284).

The transmission of the illness soon became a major preoccupation for populations at the end of Middle Ages and the beginning of modern period (Vigarello, 1993). According to medical experts from the epoch, the spread of the illness was above all related to 'bad air'. Until the 18th century, the dominant theory was that the sick contaminated ambient air through rotting, and contact was not considered to be the cause of transmission. The corruption of the air causing these illnesses was due to malignant heavenly influences, to miasmas emanating from lakes or from decomposing corpses contaminating the air. This was the aerial doctrine. The plague added the notion that the illness could be transmitted by skin pores, a new fear expressed by Jacopo Soldi (Vigarello, 1993).

The idea of contagious illness (Paillard, 1998) was highlighted by G. Fracastor[11] during the 16th century in relation to the plague (and syphilis) and was very slow to spread. It was only really accepted during the 19th century, at which time it was so widely recognized by the public that the term 'contagion' became another name for the plague (Bély, 1996). Moreover, populations regularly affected by the illness observed 'with common sense' (Delumeau, 1978, p. 137) that proximity between individuals represented a danger and set up voluntary isolation to avoid contact between those who were ill and those who were not, even though this was contrary to the convictions of scholars, who refused to believe in contagion (Carrière et al., 1968; Fabre, 1996).

The new notions related to the porosity of the body and contagion by 'small invisible living creatures' generated new preventive reactions to illnesses. Each person might resort to individual protection such as escape or exclusion that towns tried to overrule by establishing preventive systems.

From the early Middle Ages, and especially from the 16th century onwards, thanks to the ideas of Fracastor and the notions and affirmations of Boekel, it became obvious that urgent prevention was required, especially for towns where the dominant activity was commerce. For example, on the diffusion of the plague at Hamburg due to a boat from the Orient see Biraben 1975-1976. These changing ideas led to the progressive setting up of a sanitary barrier by the health offices. This institution was to become permanent in the port cities directly in contact with contaminated regions, like Marseille and the Mediterranean coast (Hildesheimer, 1980) and temporary in less-exposed port towns on the Ponant coast (Barry & Even, 2007) or in inland towns and villages.

The isolation of suspected cases and of those who were ill in infirmaries outside towns when the threat drew near became the recommended mode of prevention for small municipalities and provinces (Delumeau & Lequin, 1987, pp. 351-356; Lebrun, 1983, pp. 157-158). The Fédons infirmary and the adjoining cemetery located at more than three km from the town of Lambec are evidence of this type of measure. However, this system could be undermined when a population was caught off guard by a fast-spreading epidemic[12]. It could legitimately be panic-stricken when faced with thousands of dead bodies piling up in the streets every day. In cases such as this, the violence of the epidemic resulted in the total disorganization of the municipal structure. In Marseille and in the region, the 1720 plague shattered the preventive network and led to a series of uncontrolled individual reactions. This impression of general panic is conveyed by the measures taken (Fig. 4. 7). Popular accounts of reactions during the plague in Provence indicate that people were aware of contagion theories and had assimilated them much more quickly than doctors (Biraben, 1975-1976; Carrière et al., 1968; Fabre, 1996).



Figure 4.7: Bubonic plague victims in a mass grave from 1720-1721 in Martigues (Provence). Photo J. Chausserie-Laprée.

4.5 The Urban and Rural Environments: How was Mortality Dealt with During Epidemics?

It is important to note that the majority of the sites studied here are in settlements and part of the urban sphere. The only site in a rural environment is Fédons, which has a more conventional management of cemeteries containing a majority of individual graves and several 'small' multiple graves. In towns, the corpses were generally grouped together in pits, whether they were buried within or outside cemeteries.

Based on this first observation, it is possible to differentiate three types of funerary zones set up by towns and operating during epidemics. The first are parish cemeteries, initially used for burials but soon deserted due to the formal ban on burying infected bodies[13]. Before this directive, 'mass graves' were opened in the communal cemetery in order to deal with all the deaths. However, populations remained attached to the traditional individual grave and sometimes preferred to be buried elsewhere. In parallel, hospital cemeteries also contained pits for victims of epidemics. The use of open spaces outside holy ground attested to an additional step in the intensity of the epidemic. Lastly, municipal authorities, from the early Middle Ages onwards and especially from the 16th century, often created cemeteries outside towns during epidemics which operated at times in association with an infirmary or lazaretto. This third type illustrates the real 'epidemic cemetery' set up for the event and closed as soon as the illness passed. The site of Fédons belongs to this category.

It is thus tempting to associate individual graves and 'small' multiple graves with rural areas, and graves containing more corpses with towns. But the schema is not that simple. One reason is because our archaeological knowledge of the management of the dead in rural environments during epidemics remains scant. Preventive archaeological operations are generally limited to towns, leaving a gap in the rural record. However, it is possible to refute this apparently obvious link on the basis of an urban archaeological example. Since the 16th century, Protestants were not allowed to bury their dead in parish churches and cemeteries. In 2005, the excavation of a cemetery related to the only 17th century Parisian temple at Charenton took place (Dufour, 2012). This cemetery contained the remains of people from Paris as a whole, and brought to light a very dense concentration of burials (Dufour, 2012). It included the discovery of several individual tombs of plague victims. Due to the inscription engraved on the lead coffin of a Protestant student, Lord Thomas Craven, mentioning the date and cause of death by the plague, this became one of the key questions very early on in the excavation. A molecular biochemical analysis conducted on the teeth of six individuals, taken at random in the cemetery, yielded positive results for the bacillum *Yersinia pestis* for four of them (Hadjouis et al., 2006-2007). The deceased were systematically buried individually, in coffins and wrapped in a shroud, attesting to the constancy in funerary practices during periods of plague. The identification of an epidemic by the Protestant community did not change or influence funerary rituals in any way, though it is of course possible that multiple burials existed in the non-excavated zones. Therefore, the management of the ill and the burial of corpses were not simply linked to the geographical environment stricken by the epidemic, but also to the type of organisation, municipal or communal, set up for the ill and the corpses. The site of Fédons is a good example, since even though it is in a rural environment, the installation of the graveyard was the result of a directive issued by the local municipal authorities of the neighbouring town, which opted for moving the ill out of town in order to curb the spread of the illness.

Until the end of the 17th century, towns reacted individually to epidemics in the absence of decisions issued by central authorities: the first national measures were taken during the plague in Marseille during the 18th century. Both lay and religious local urban authorities neglected rural communities in order to maintain and protect commercial activity. They focused instead on preventive measures in their city through information campaigns. Access was closed to anyone suspicious or judged liable to spread the illness. The inhabitants remained behind the enclosed walls which ensured their safety but also led to overcrowding, lack of hygiene and thus to the spread of the illness (Chartier & Neveux

in Le Roy Ladurie, 1980, pp. 38-39). The urban character of the epidemic thus led to the multiplication of the number of those affected and to the creation of institutions for removing the ill from the community. These establishments were installed in the nearby countryside. The epidemic phenomenon is thus impressive in urban environments due to higher population densities. However, the urban population only made up a small minority of the

overall kingdom as the population of the Ancien Régime was predominantly rural. In the countryside, this phenomenon appeared to be less marked, due to settlement dispersal and the isolation of populations accentuated by the epidemic (Delumeau, 1978, pp. 98-142; Lebrun, 1983, p. 159).

Historic sources such as parish registers contain essential information relating to deaths during epidemics and compensate for the absence of archaeological data in rural environments. In Aquitaine, the doctor Louis Couyba (1845-1909), a native of Sainte-Livrade (Lot), undertook a study of the history of his native region, concentrating on the registers from several communes in order to portray the countryside in the Agen area during the different waves of the plague during the 17th century (Couyba, 1905). His study shows that the management of deaths in the countryside depended on the coordination and the organization of rural folk. Although the first burials took place in the parish cemetery, it seems that the isolation of rural dwellers encouraged families to organize burials as quickly as possible very near the place of death, due to the risk of contagion and the corruption of the corpse. The burial took place either near a barn or in a garden. When space became tight, fields were also rented out. This was similar to measures taken in towns when new *extra-muros* burial grounds were opened.

The effects of an epidemic can be unpredictable if it strikes one village but spares the neighbouring village (Biraben, 1975-1976, pp. 226-229; Lebrun, 1980, pp. 209,), or only affects several people. This random spread confers an endemic rather than an epidemic aspect on the illness. Our vision of the reactions of the population and the organization of death can therefore be altered (Hildesheimer, 1993, p. 16). Thus, it appears that in rural environments, some of the reactions of the population may elude us totally. However, they remain similar to urban practices in that burials normally take place in the communal cemetery, but are then moved to open spaces in order to deal with an increasing number of deaths. When the rate of mortality is excessive during epidemic peaks, communication and organization cannot be maintained and burial management becomes fragmented as the family, the key unit in the structure of rural society, is rapidly destroyed, thereby throwing the economy and rural life into disarray. Country folk thus become increasingly isolated from each other during the course of such deaths (Le Roy Ladurie, 1975).

4.6 The Memory of Crisis Episodes

When an epidemic passed, what became of burial grounds set up in urgent circumstances? Among the five studied sites, two of them (Les

Fédons and Issoudun) have historical or archaeological evidence indicating that the event and/or the burial grounds were soon forgotten. The infirmary of Fédons was closed very shortly after the period of contagion, and the area assigned to burials was re-used as agricultural land (Reynaud, 2005). At Issoudun, the installation of two series of multiple burials in

a relatively short lapse of time and in the same sector indicates that the first epidemic episode no longer preoccupied the living as a new crisis phenomenon occurred (Souquet-Leroy, in Blanchard et al., 2011). This new reaction to omnipresent death demonstrates that it required collective, rather than individual responses. Different factors are responsible for this forgetting. During periods of epidemics the main priority was to evacuate corpses, and not to conduct the last sacraments for the peace of the souls of the deceased, even if the place of burial, which was chosen in random fashion, might reveal some attempts at religious rituals, such as burials installed near a cross (Blanchard & Georges, 2007). Corpses were 'excluded' from cemeteries due to fear of contamination but were not deprived of burials (Vivas, 2012). However, death by epidemic is no longer necessarily considered a personal experience since it is multiple and visible to all (Delumeau, 1978, p. 115). Mortuary rites devoted to the individual person no longer exist.

The increase in the number of deaths as well as the multiplicity of burial grounds was not conducive to a process of recollection. In the cemetery, the creation of space for future graves was a constant preoccupation. And in towns or in the countryside, once the epidemic passed, life returned to normal and due to social and economic necessities, burial grounds were used for everyday activities including the commercial and agricultural. Burial grounds were covered over and forgotten. But early populations dealt with the inexplicable nature of an epidemic by bringing a religious element to it, either during or after the crisis (Walter, 2008). Processions and displays of collective piety were organized to dispel divine anger: the epidemic was considered to be the expression of a divine punishment in response to sins (Delumeau, 1978; Porter, 1992)[14]. These rituals helped people to get through periods of crisis (Walter, 2008). Other processes were set up to preserve the memory of these events, but not systematically of burial places nor of those deceased. The erection of a monument near the burial grounds after the event, as well as the presence of a cross, became the guardian of the memory of these catastrophic episodes but not of the individuals affected by the epidemic (Colardelle, 1998). For example, the disinfector of 1653, Martin Grou, built a chapel devoted to St-Roch near Renaud Lodge, and the first stone was erected on April 9, 1669, in commemoration of the plagues of 1652 to 1654. Many masses were celebrated there (Couyba, 1905). In the same way as death, memory was not a private or family affair but a collective matter organized by the living population. It was the event, rather than the place or the people, which was commemorated. This was an essential step as it enabled people to fight against the image of the plague and return to an ordinary life (Clavandier, 2004). However, due to

the regularity of epidemic crises during the Ancien Régime , they became part of daily life for these populations, despite their impact. In that respect, they are very different from other natural catastrophes, which were much rarer.

4.7 Conclusion

Over the past ten years, discoveries of graves linked to an epidemic crisis have increased considerably, due to preventive archaeological operations in France. These structures are thus more easily identifiable. Epidemic crises brought about the abolition of personalized death as it was no longer possible to cater for the ill, the dying and the dead in hospitals and institutions (Delumeau, 1978, p. 153). These episodes represented a brutal rupture with daily customs as this collective death was anonymous and desacralized. Among the many epidemic diseases known during the Ancien Régime, the plague plays a major role for several reasons, namely because of the brutality of the illness, the number of deaths and the social disorganization it caused. Syphilis brought enhanced understanding of the spread of illnesses, as it was passed from person to person.

This first overview of mortality during the modern period enables us to grasp the importance of inter-disciplinary research combining archaeology, anthropology, history and medicine in our understanding of episodes of epidemics and their impact on populations. It appears that all analyses require distinct objectives as soon as fieldwork begins in order to provide answers to specific issues and to ensure rigorous data acquisition. This means that sites must be accurately dated, using radiocarbon and other dating methods, in order to correlate archaeological data with archival sources. The detection of the nature of the epidemic (by pathogenic DNA) is also an essential source of information. The identification of the illness may be responsible for the disruption of funerary practices in one case and not in another. Medical knowledge evolved during the course of the modern period and contagion was no longer a totally abstract concept. It will be necessary to continue and complete this research by conducting a summary of the funerary practices of modern populations. This will be conducted by one of us (ISL) in order to place this phenomenon in a social and political context. One of the advantages of studying the modern period is the possibility of comparing various documentary sources with different data such as the archaeological and demographic. Archaeological data such as those described above are of capital importance in this domain. Finally, as epidemics were not exclusively a French scourge, it would also be interesting to compare the reactions of French populations to

those from neighbouring countries with different political régimes from the absolute monarchy which reigned in France.

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1 The Ancien Régime, in France, is the chronological period from the beginning of the 16th century until the eve of the French Revolution in 1789. For three centuries, the French population is characterized by a high rural residence rate, with 80% of the overall population living in the countryside, and a mainly agricultural economy (Garnot, 1988).

2 Referring to populations from the periods before the creation of the smallpox vaccine by Jenner (1796), which radically changed the mortality profile after the administration of the first vaccinations.

3 Sending newborns to wet nurses played a considerable role in infant mortality yet was widespread among urban populations. Wet nurses were generally poor and accepted several children as well as their own. Consequently, dubious living conditions were a significant danger, and feeding methods (with animal milk) were very often fatal for babies (Badinter, 1980; Lalou, 1990; Rollet, 1978).

4 'People do not physically die of hunger' in towns in the 18th century (Le Roy Ladurie, 1980, p. 332). Rather, famine weakens organisms and illnesses develop within populations, killing a large number of people. It can thus be associated with an illness imputable to malnourishment (mortality by simple starvation), or to contagion inseparable from shortages, which not only contribute to the development of illnesses but also to their propagation (Jean Meuvret, 1946, p. 644). However E. Le Roy Ladurie differentiates between urban mortality in the 18th century mainly due to illnesses, and mortality during the preceding centuries during which 'pure and simple hunger … may have killed their medieval ancestors and those who died during the reign of Louis XIV' (Le Roy Ladurie, 1980, p. 341).

5 For example, we can cite an Italian treaty by Rolando Capelluti, the '*Tractatus de curatione pestierorum apostermatum*' (1481-1487), or the '*Traicté et remèdes contre la peste: utiles te salutaires à gens de tous estatz*' by Master Jehan Guido, Regent Doctor at the University of Paris, 1545. It is not possible to cite the countless works written on this subject, symptomatic of a constant preoccupation.

6 Tuberculosis and syphilis are, in the same way as leprosy, illnesses which did not affect populations on the same scale or with the same speed as the plague or cholera. They are contagious illnesses which spread slowly 'which proceed by successive epidemic and endemic phases with particular rhythms' (Ruffié & Sournia, 1984, p. 149). They played an important role in early populations due to their social and demographic impact (Hildesheimer, 1993). For this reason, we cite them alongside brutal epidemic illnesses.

7 We differentiate the “shroud”, a sheet sewn firmly around the corpse, from the simple cloth wrapped around the corpse rapidly during epidemics in order to handle the corpse. The lack of evidence, such as the presence of pins or “wide” positions of the deceased in multiple burials such as at Issoudun (cf. infra) could point to such practices. In this case, the treatment of the corpses may be related to an institution taking charge of the ill and minimizing handling the dead. Descriptions of corpses manipulated in sheets or blankets have been described during the plague in Marseille (Carrière, Coudurié & Rebuffat, 1968).

8 Certain deceased were buried immediately after their death, i.e., dressed or in the state they were in at the time of death. This was the case during epidemic peaks when disorganization reigned and funerary practices were no longer respected. The only requirement was to get rid of corpses as quickly as possible by burying them in large pits (see below).

9 Many descriptions have been left by contemporaries, including the localization of the boils, the swollen tongue, ardent thirst, intense fever, shivers, irregular pulse, violent delirium, troubles of the nervous system, headaches, a fixed stare...

10 In parallel, collective piety and processions were responses to belief in divine justice for sinners. These beliefs were responsible for the creation of places of worship after epidemic crises (see infra).

11 In *Les 3 Livres sur la contagion, les maladies contagieuses et leur traitement*, Paris, 1893 (1st Latin edition, 1550). He differentiates three models of contagion very early on: contagion by direct physical contact (touching), indirect contagion through contact with objects or merchandise, and distant airborne contagion, which reiterates the aerial thesis. Shortly before him, several doctors in the north of Italy developed a theory on contagion but this did not generate much interest in spite of their extensive knowledge of the European illnesses of the period (Fabre, 1996). This notion replaced the Hippocratic theory which emphasized environmental influences. The contamination by those stricken by epidemics was thus perceived as air-borne contamination rather than direct person-to-person contamination.

12 The non-application of laws with regard to boats from countries ‘at risk’ and the negligence of the authorities led to the rapid propagation of the illness from poor and overcrowded neighbourhoods. The population was only warned and preventive measures set up when it was already too late (Carrière, Coudurié & Rebuffat, 1968).

13 The ‘General rule for the rights of the parish church of S. Séverin, in Paris, and officers, quests and functions of the officers, 19 April 1637’, cited in Couyba, 1905, p. 185.

14 ‘the plague, leprosy, syphilis and cholera, all these illnesses, because they were new, or sudden or simply because of their epidemic nature, whether they are inexplicable or incurable, or even particularly disabling, are interpreted as stigmatizing vice or sin, whether individual or collective’ (Porter, 1992, p. 185)

Vitolds Muižnieks

5 The Co-Existence of Two Traditions in the Territory of Present-Day Latvia in the 13th–18th Centuries: Burial in Dress and in a Shroud

Introduction

The perception of death and of life beyond the grave is one area of human spiritual life that has been significantly altered through the influence of Christianity. Ideas concerning death and life after death are manifested in mortuary practices. The form of burial indicates changes in world view and religious beliefs that followed conversion to Christianity.

In studies by historians and archaeologists the main criteria attesting to the influence of Christianity in the sphere of mortuary practices are generally taken to be: inhumation, aligned with the head to the west, burial in a shroud, and burial in churches and consecrated churchyards (Zoll-Adamikowa, 1971; Fehring, 1979; Gräslund, 1987; Valk, 1998). These criteria are seen as the characteristic features of Christian burial rites, which were gradually introduced into the burial practices of the inhabitants of Western and Central-Eastern Europe along with the spread of Christianity.

The process of consolidation of burial practices connected with Church funerary ritual differed from country to country, depending on the time and conditions of the spread of Christianity. In some areas this was a long process, while elsewhere the changes followed very soon after conversion to Christianity and the establishment of parochial organisation. For example, in Scandinavia, northern Germany and Poland the changes in the form of burial occurred over a period of 100–200 years. On the other hand, in the area populated by Baltic and Finnic groups (present-day Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and former Prussia) the process was protracted, lasting more than 500 years (Валуев, 2003; Muižnieks, 2011; Valk, 2001; Урбанавичюс, 1985; Žulkus, 1998). If we take into account the aforementioned characteristics of burial rites, we may consider that here the transition from paganism to Christianity was never really completed. It did not happen in the Middle Ages (13th–15th centuries) or later, in the comparatively recent past, the 19th or 20th century. During this whole period in Latvia and the neighbouring lands the continuity of particular burial traditions can be observed, something

we can largely regard as a regional peculiarity.

5.1 The Christianisation of Latvia and Changes in the Form of Burial

With the spread of Christianity in the 11th–13th century, the Baltic and Finnic peoples inhabiting present-day Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland and former Prussia came to be within the area of influence of both the Western Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. In this period efforts to introduce the Christian faith were connected with activities by the Catholic rulers of Scandinavia, and the Orthodox princes and traders of Russia. In the late 12th century the Holy Roman Empire also became actively involved in spreading Christianity: having expanded its realm to the southern shores of the Baltic Sea, it continued to extend its influence further eastwards. Accordingly, in Latvian historiography three partially overlapping periods of the spread of Christianity are distinguished: Scandinavian, Slavic and German (Mugurēvičs, 1987).

During the first two stages the native peoples' acquaintance with Christianity was largely of an indirect nature. In the 11th and 12th centuries there is no reliable evidence of any purposefully established mission nor of missionary activities by the Catholic or Orthodox Church. The information about churches and church-building in the written sources can be explained as referring to special cases, where the churches served the needs of a narrow group of traders and settlers. This is confirmed by the fact mentioned in the History of the Archbishopric of Hamburg (*Gesta Hamburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*), by Adam of Bremen († *circa* 1085), that in 1070 a Danish merchant, urged by the King of Denmark, built a church in Couronia (Anderson 1989, 252). Likewise, the Orthodox centres at Jersika (in Latgale) and Koknese (in Vidzeme) are mentioned in the 13th century Chronicle of Henry in connection with the Russians (*rutheni*) who were living here (Indriķa Hronika [IH] X, 3; XI, 8; XIII, 4). It is not impossible that some of the native inhabitants had also been converted to Orthodoxy and were accordingly referred to as *rutheni*, since in the 13th century the term could be used not only in an ethnic, but also an ecclesiastical sense. Judging from the Chronicle of Henry, the inhabitants of present-day northern Vidzeme (Tālava) and south-eastern Estonia (Otepää) also belonged to the Orthodox community. In the 13th century, as a result of the crusades, they adopted the Latin faith (IH XI, 7; XIV, 2; XVIII, 3; XX, 3). Unfortunately, the author of the chronicle does not reveal to what extent the native peoples were familiar with Orthodoxy: whether it was the majority of the population who were Christian or just a restricted group – the social

élite.

Indirectly reflecting the influence of Orthodoxy are the symbols connected with Christianity that are represented in the 11th and 12th century material from occupation sites and burial sites in the area of present-day Latvia: enamel eggs, various crosses, medallions and enkolpions with images of the saints. (Мугуревич, 1965, p. 71;

Mugurēvičs 1974; Mugurēvičs, 1999). On burial sites they have been discovered mainly with female and child burials, along with other kinds of pendants and artefacts. It is also thought that various Latvian words relating to Church terminology were borrowed from Old Slavic at this time: *gavēt* (to fast), *zvans* (bell), *krusts* (cross), *svece* (candle), *grēks* (sin) etc. (Anderson, 1989, pp. 246, 247). On the other hand, the archaeological material from 11th and 12th century burial sites does not reveal significant changes in the form of burial. In terms of grave orientation, the native traditions are preserved, and the dead are buried with elaborate jewellery and other grave goods. In parallel with inhumation, cremation is also practised; the dead are buried in flat and barrow cemeteries. In view of this, locating the earliest churches is problematic. Perhaps because of this, so far it has not been possible to obtain convincing archaeological evidence of 11th and 12th century religious buildings and churchyards.

A different situation developed during the third period of Christianisation, in the late 12th and 13th centuries. The impact of German missionary and crusading activities was significantly more extensive and purposeful, affecting the political, social, economic and spiritual areas of life. The course of this mission is documented extensively in written sources (the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia, the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle, papal bulls, agreements etc.), which reflect the course of the spread of Christianity and subsequent events. The advent of written culture and the introduction of Christianity were followed by a series of other changes: the Western European system of feudal relations was introduced, the Livonian Confederation of ecclesiastical states came into being, towns were founded, stone castles and religious buildings erected, and a parochial system established, for example. These processes affected the whole area of present-day Latvia. The events and their consequences are partly also reflected in the archaeological material from residential and burial sites (LA 1974, pp. 285– 300).

Archaeological excavation has been undertaken at more than 250 burial sites from the 13th–18th centuries, including urban and rural parish cemeteries, chapel sites and other locations (Muižnieks, 2005) (Fig. 1). Major excavation has also been undertaken at the earliest churches and churchyards, established already in the time of Bishops Meinhard, Berthold and Albert, in the late 12th and early 13th centuries (Ikšķile, Mārtiņsala, Rīga, Aizkraukle and elsewhere). This research has served to reveal and characterise the influence of Christianity on the form of burial, which can be compared with other contemporaneous burial sites.

The archaeological material shows that from the 13th century the local burial practices of the native peoples (Livs, Couronians,

Semigallians, Latgallians and Selonians) gradually disappear, and in their place a characteristic form of burial gradually becomes established across all of present-day Latvia. The majority of norms associated with Christian funerary ritual are adopted starting from the 15th century. At this time cremation disappears, having been widely practiced hitherto in the areas populated by the Couronians and occasionally represented at burial sites of the other ethnic groups as well. In eastern Latvia cremation was discontinued during the 13th and 14th century, whereas in western Latvia (Kurzeme) cremation burials disappear in the first half of the 15th century. Grave orientation towards the west became established, observable with minor deviation in more than in 90% of cases. The tradition of raising burial mounds or creating stone structures over burials disappeared. In the 15th–18th centuries the barrows and stone graves of earlier periods (mainly the Bronze and Early Iron Age) were used only for secondary burials. Flat cemeteries became the dominant kind of burial site, and in many cases burial was organised on the model of churchyards, being within a delimited area, in rows and in several layers, observing grave orientation to the west and so forth (Muižnieks, 2011).

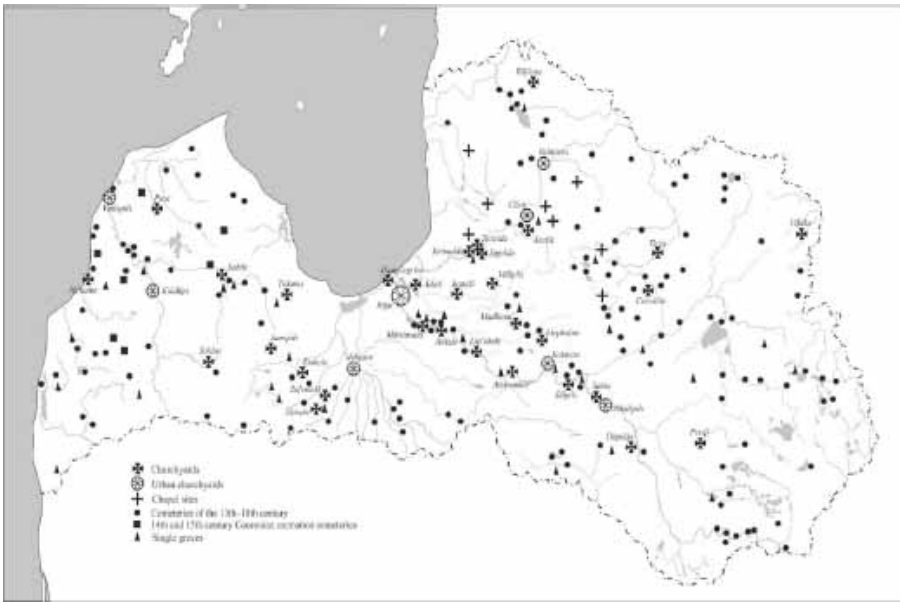


Figure 5.1: Archaeologically excavated medieval and early modern burial sites.

Several of these changes took place relatively quickly during the 13th–15th centuries, but the practice of burying the dead in dress and with grave goods continued up to the 18th and 19th centuries, and even later. Sometimes offerings of food were made to the deceased; funeral meals were eaten beside the graves or within the cemetery, and feasts held in memory of the dead. Likewise, in the period from the 13th–18th centuries the dead were not consistently buried in consecrated churchyards next to churches. Other burial sites, not directly connected with churchyards, were utilised, these being located in the vicinity of settlement sites such as villages,

parishes, manors and individual farmsteads (Muižnieks, 2010). In this regard, there were no significant changes following the Reformation or Counter-Reformation. The form of burial with its characteristic features that became established in the Middle Ages continued into the Modern Era.

5.2 Burial in Dress and with Grave Goods

Following the establishment of a parochial system, the pattern of Christianisation in most states and countries involved a transition from local burial sites to churchyards, abandoning at the same time the practice of burial in dress and with grave goods (Rom and Byzanz 1997–1998; Valk 1998). In the case of Latvia and the neighbouring lands the tradition of burial in dress and with grave goods was not interrupted. It was practiced from prehistoric times into the Middle Ages and the Modern Era as well. In this regard, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries did not introduce significant changes. The tradition of burying the dead in their dress and with grave goods was retained in both Protestant and Catholic districts.

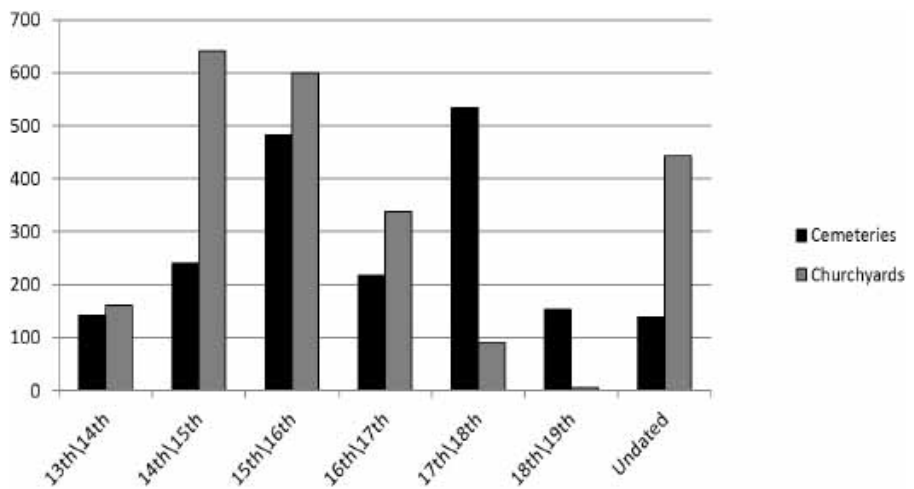


Figure 5.2: The number of archaeologically excavated burials with grave goods.

Burials of men, women, adolescents and children together with dress remains and grave goods occur both on local burial sites and in churchyards (Fig. 5.2). In neither case can these burials be viewed as exceptional, since most members of society, rather than just particular individuals, were being buried in dress and with grave goods (jewellery, tools, everyday utensils etc.). This tradition existed contemporaneously with the practice of burial in a shroud, which was gradually introduced starting from the turn of the 13th century. In cemeteries located next to medieval castles, manor centres, and in villages and townships, burial with grave goods is confirmed in 44% of cases, whereas burials with grave goods at sites unconnected with these centres more frequently have grave goods: in 58% of cases (Tab. 5.1). It is thought that the differences between the two groups of burial sites can be explained in terms of the more frequent observance of the burial traditions practiced in Western Europe in churchyards. Churchyards could also contain the burials not only of the native population of the rural areas of present-day Latvia, but also of foreigners and their descendants.

Table 5.1: Grave goods in rural churchyards of the 13th–18th centuries.

Parish	No. of graves	Grave goods, %	Tools, %	Weapons, %	Ornaments, %	Coins, %	Date (cent.)
Aizkraukle (Ascheraden)	131	75%	22	0	66	12	13th-17th
Ādaži (Neuermühlen)	32	34%	3	0	4	93	17th,18th
Āraiši (Arrasch)	28	18%	44	0	56	0	14th-18th
Cesvaine (Sesswegen)	264	21%	14	0	65	21	14th-6th\17th
Dobele (Doblen)	1344	42%	24	1	65	10	14th\15th-16th\17th
Ikšķile (Uexküll)	835	32%	13.5	0.5	83	3	12th\13th-18th
Jaunpils (Neuenburg)	3	33%	0	0	0	100	17th
Krimulda (Cremon)	4	50%	0	0	100	0	17th,18th
Lielvārde (Lennewarden)	10	60%	23	0	69	8	13th-18th

Madliena (Sissegal)	20	80%	16	2	38	44	13th\14th-17th
Mārtiņsala (Martinsholm)	1808	46%	22.5	0.5	70	7	12th\13th-17th
Preiļi (Prele)	25	12%	0	0	17	83	17th, 18th
Puze (Pussen)	148	84%	13	1	80	6	13th\14th-17th
Ropaži (Rodenpoys)	8	50%	13	0	62	25	15th-17th
Sabile (Zabeln)	5	80%	16	0	47	37	14th-18th
Salas (Holmhof)	93	50%	14	0	30	56	15th\16th-17th
Saldus (Frauenburg)	57	70%	16	0	78	6	15th,16th
Saldus Jāņa (Johannis)	33	18%	14	0	86	0	17th, 18th
Sēlpils (Selburg)	234	58%	31	1	53	15	13th\14th-17th
Tērvete (Hofzumberge)	56	68%	14	0	28	58	15th\16th-16th
Turaida (Treyden)	45	36%	10	0	55	35	13th-18th
Zaļenieki (Grünhof)	20	75%	27	0	67	6	16th
	5203	**44%**					

A good example is the church and churchyard of Ikšķile, established in the time of Bishop Meinhard at the end of the 12th century and serving as the initial base for missionaries and crusaders. In the excavated part of the cemetery, where burial continued up to the 17th century, only 32% of burials were found to have grave goods. Judging from the stratigraphy of the burials (rows and layers), burials with and without grave goods are contemporaneous. The artefacts recovered from the graves clearly indicate that the provision of grave goods was generally a practice of the native inhabitants. Similarly, at the churchyard of Mārtiņsala, consecrated in 1197 in the time of Bishop Berthold and used until the early 17th century, there are contemporaneous burials with and without grave goods. Grave goods are more frequent in the graves of the churchyard (46%) than in the graves excavated within the church itself (27%) (Muižnieks, 2006, pp. 173, 179). It was generally the members of the higher-ranking social orders who were buried inside churches: the clergy, members of the Livonian Order, vassals, burghers, etc., who in general did not come from the native population. Judging from the ornaments found with the burials, members of the native community were buried in Mārtiņsala Church, accompanied by grave goods. Some of the graves ended up inside the church as a result of alteration work, the church being extended to include part of the former churchyard.

The differences between the burial practices of the native population and the newcomers are also vividly observable in the archaeological material of the urban cemeteries, where burials without grave goods predominate. For example, in the excavated 'Grey Cemetery' on the north side of Riga Cathedral burials without grave goods constitute more than 80% of the total. Grave goods (dress accessories, tools and coins) occur mainly with the chronologically earlier burials, from the 13th and early 14th centuries, and with the early modern burials (Tilko, 1998). Similarly, individual burials with grave goods from the 13th and the turn of the 14th centuries, and also from the Early Modern Era (16th and 17th centuries), have also been discovered in the churchyard of St Peter's in Riga (Pāvele, 1959; Spirgis, 2012). Judging from the finds, it was the native population, descendants of the Livs, Semigallians and Couronians, who were buried in dress and with grave goods. The urban population initially consisted of people from the rural areas of present-day Latvia, who had settled here already at the end of the 12th century. Later, after the founding of the city of Riga, they were joined by merchants from Russia and settlers from Western Europe. In the cultural layer of the oldest settlements in Riga, jewellery of the native peoples can generally be found in the period up to the 15th century, largely corresponding to the finds from the 13th and 14th century burials in the churchyards of Riga (Caune & Gammeršmite, 1983; Celmiņš 2009;

Smiltniece & Vijups, 1998). Evidently, in the 14th and 15th centuries the local jewellery ceased to be widely used, a development that could have been influenced by regulations limiting ostentation and jewellery-wearing, as well as by the control exerted over the manufacture of jewellery in the city and its import (Šterns, 1997, p. 269; Taube, 1960). It is thought that the practice of providing grave goods (jewellery, tools

and other objects) ceased at the same time. Much less jewellery of the native peoples has been found in the cemeteries than in the urban cultural layer, indicating that from the start (in the 13th century) the permanent residents of the town, both native and non-native, were burying their dead in shrouds. It is possible that integration of the native population into the urban cultural milieu was promoted by the corporate structures – confraternities of merchants and craftsmen – that regulated the life of the townspeople, including funerals[1].

Judging by the evidence from excavations at urban cemeteries in Latvia and Estonia, grave goods start to appear more frequently again from the 16th century onwards. These changes can partly be explained through the influx of rural people into the towns, especially in times of war and famine, which particularly affected the inhabitants of present-day Latvia in the 16th–18th centuries (Valk, 2004). It may be thought that the Reformation, which first spread in the towns of Livonia and subsequently came to encompass rural areas, also had an important role. The influence of the Reformation led to a decline in the religiosity characteristic of the Middle Ages, something that also affected burial practices. In Western Europe, from the 16th century onwards, the shroud was progressively replaced by funeral costume, in addition to which burial in secular dress also began, and grave goods increasingly appeared (Kenzler, 2011; Felgenhauer-Schmiedt, 1993; Wittkopp, 1997).

Similar changes followed in the urban cemeteries of Latvia and in those rural parish churches where mostly people of foreign origin were buried. For example, the 16th–18th century burials of the Dukes of Courland and Semigallia (in Jelgava) and likewise the family burial vault of the barons in St John's Church, Saldus, and the burials of townspeople in St Peter's Church, Riga, in many cases have remains of dress, jewellery, everyday items and other objects which rarely occur with medieval burials (Ārends, 1940; Celmiņš, 2012, p. 99; Līdaka & Ruša, 1996)[2]. It is possible that the changes in the form of burial that appeared among the non-native population and their descendants indirectly promoted a continuation of the tradition among the native population of burial in secular dress. At archaeologically excavated sites this tradition is indicated by finds of elements of dress and grave goods with burials. In rural cemeteries in the period from the 13th–18th centuries grave goods are

represented in 50% of graves. The burials have elements of dress (crown head-dresses, woollen shawls, footcloths, footwear, belts, buckles, buttons, hooks and loops, pins), ornaments used to fasten the dress (brooches and dress-pins) as well as objects not relating directly to dress (necklaces, finger-rings, bracelets, tools, weapons, coins, items of personal hygiene, etc.) (Fig. 5.3).

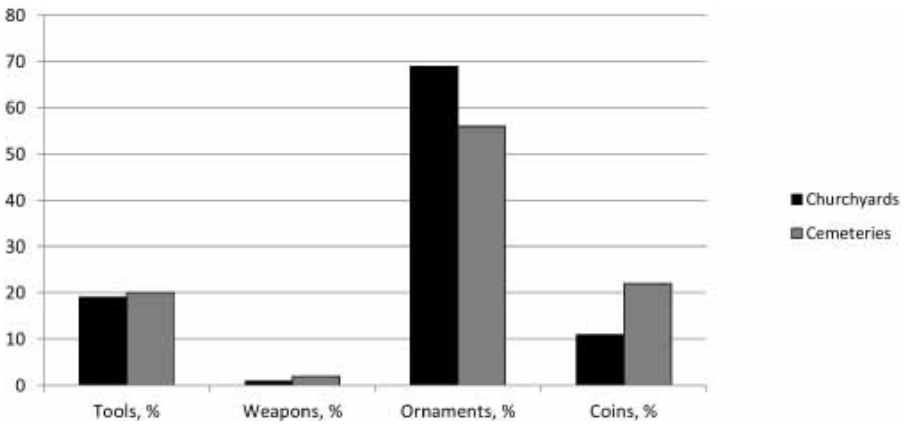


Figure 5.3: Percentage breakdown of categories of grave goods at burial sites.

Both groups of burial sites (churchyards and local burial sites) show a higher proportion of grave goods in the medieval graves than the early modern graves. Over the centuries there were changes in the range and quantity of grave goods provided for the deceased. Starting already in the 13th century, the large objects – such as swords, horse trappings, clay pots, sickles, scythes, shears, pectoral ornaments and neck-rings – gradually disappear from the range of grave goods (Fig. 5.4). This can be observed clearly at the parish churchyards such as Ikšķile, Mārtiņsala, Aizkraukle and Sēlpils (LA, 1974, pp. 295–300). Similar changes occurred at the local burial sites, where the number and range of grave goods decrease over time. This process, traceable in the archaeological material of both groups of burial sites, was promoted by several factors, including changes in religious views, traditions, fashion, socio-economic conditions. The finds from early modern (16th–18th century) burials mostly relate to dress (brooches, buttons, belts, buckles, loops and hooks). The most common everyday utensils are knives and sewing equipment (Fig. 5.5). Ritual coins became favourite grave goods, and in percentage terms they often comprise the largest proportion of the finds from burials of this period.

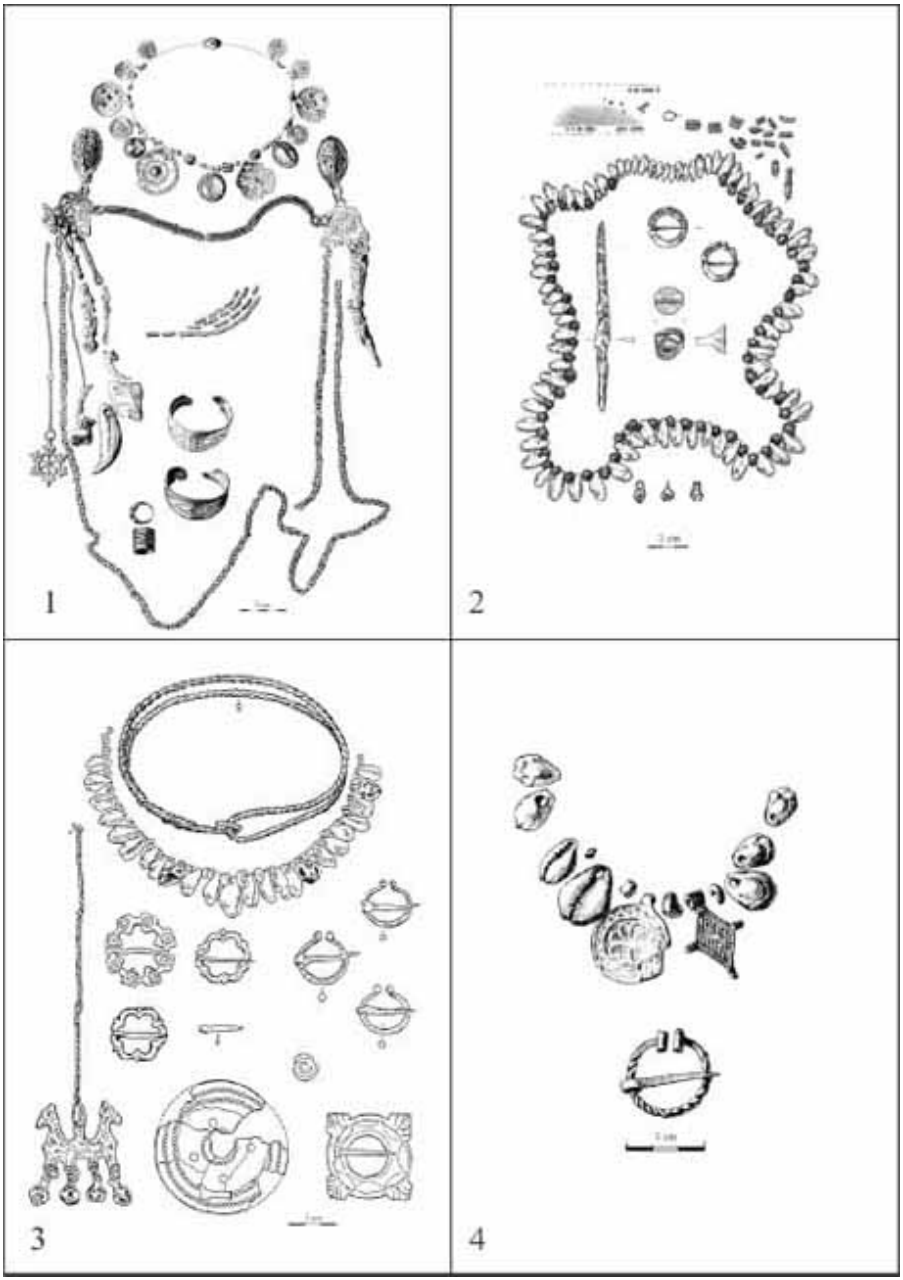


Figure 5.4: Female burials of the 13th-16th centuries. 1 – Churchyard of Mārtiņsala, inventory of Burial No. 1212 (13th century), excavated by A. Zariņa in 1966; 2 – Churchyard of Sabile, inventory of Burial No. 5 (14th century), excavated by I. Berga and V. Muižnieks in 2006; 3 – Churchyard of Dobele, inventory of Burial No. 740 (15th century), excavated by J. Daiga in 1981; 4 – Churchyard of Sēlpils, inventory of Burial No. 225 (16th century), excavated by A. Zariņa in 1964.

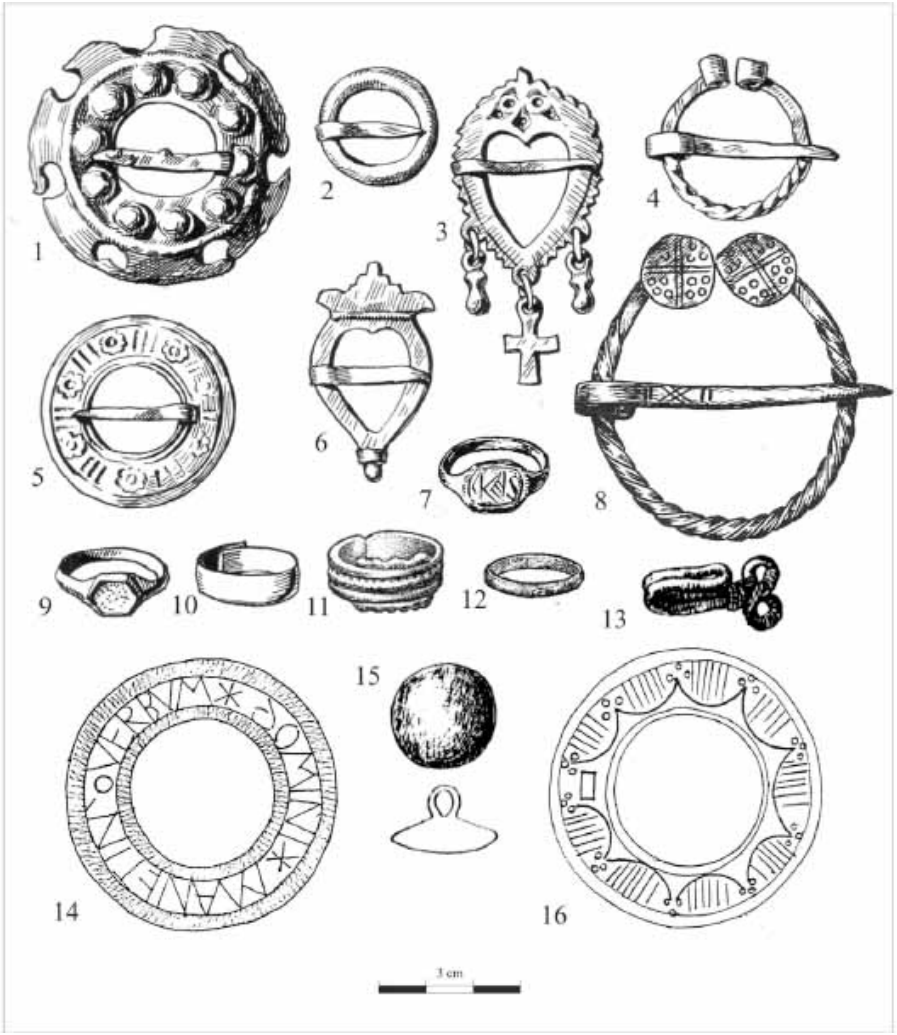


Figure 5.5: Ornaments and elements of dress from early modern burials (1-6, 8, 14, 16 – brooches; 7, 9-12 – rings; 13 – dress hook; 15 – button). Items 1-6, 9, 10 – Jēkabpils Zvanītāji, Churchyard of Salas muiža, excavated by E. Šnore in 1974; Item 7 – Churchyard of Sēlpils, excavated by A. Zariņa in 1964; Item 8 – Kastrānes Skubiņi cemetery, excavated by P. Stepiņš in 1937; Items 11, 12 – Jersikas Ružas cemetery, excavated by N. Jefimova in 1989-1991; Items 13, 15 – Auru Agrārieši cemetery, excavated by J. Graudonis in 1959; Items 14, 16 – Churchyard of Dobele, excavated by J. Daiga in 1972-1982.

So far, no differences in the range of grave goods have been observed that might reflect affiliation to a particular denomination. Analogous groups of objects are represented in graves in Lutheran and Catholic rural areas. Elsewhere in Europe the early modern burials in Catholic cemeteries usually have medallions showing images of the saints and rosaries, while Protestant burials have prayer and hymn books (Kenzler, 2011, p. 25). Rosaries were being made in Livonia already in the Middle Ages. Rosary makers (*paternostermacher*) are mentioned in Riga in the 14th century (Stieda & Mettig, 1896, p. 69). In later documents, from 1545 and even in the 17th century, the rosary is mentioned as a favourite gift for a bride and as a woman's necklace (Ģinters, 1938, p. 148; Kelch, 1695, p. 21; Olearius, 1656, p. 107). It has not proved possible so far to distinguish clearly objects belonging to this category from the rest of the finds. Neither are there any hymn books or remains of them from burials, even though folklore attests to a tradition of placing them in the grave (Šmits, 1941, p. 2064). Judging from the range and quantity of jewellery found with early modern burials, it was mainly less valuable ornaments that were placed in the grave, compared to those worn in life. Silver brooches, rings, belts and so on were usually bequeathed instead. This is indicated by the silver jewellery found in hoards and by the mentions of silver and gold objects belonging to Latvians in inventories of the property of the city of Riga (Ceplīte, 1970; Ģinters, 1938; Jansons, 1971; Straubergs, 1939). It is possible that in the Early Modern Era, in contrast to the Middle Ages, the dead were no longer buried in elaborate festive attire, everyday dress serving this purpose instead.

5.3 Cultural Aspects of the Burial Customs

The evidence in medieval written sources concerning grave goods and the dress of the deceased is comparatively meagre and general. The sources from the early period of Livonia give no specific indications or requirements that might reflect changes in burial ritual and indicate to what degree new practices were introduced or old ones retained. We may gauge the position taken by the Church from the context of written sources reflecting the events of Christianisation. For example, the encyclopaedia by English monk Bartholomaeus Anglicus (*De Proprietatibus Rerum*) discusses, in the geographical description of Livonia, the practices of the native population before conversion to Christianity, including cremation of the dead, burial in dress, together with livestock, slaves, servants and various items. The author notes that at the time of writing (*circa* 1240), by the grace of God and the aid of the Germans, this land and other districts under its control have been freed

from this superstition (Spekke, 1935, pp. 92, 93). Interesting in this regard is the peace treaty concluded in Christburg in 1249 between the Teutonic Order and the Prussians, in accordance with which the inhabitants of several Prussian districts had to abandon their pagan cults and bury their dead in cemeteries according to Christian practice. They had to cease to perform

cremation or to bury the dead together with horses, people, weapons, fine dress or other valuable things[3]. Among the written sources from Livonia, only the Statutes of the Synod of the Riga Ecclesiastical Province, from 1428, elaborate on funerary practices, condemning burial in unconsecrated cemeteries from pagan times (*locis prophanis*), as well as feasts (*convivia*) held on memorial days in cemeteries and churches[4]. Judging from these sources, the official position of the Church in Livonia did not diverge significantly from the norms observed elsewhere. Thus, the dead were to be buried in consecrated churchyards rather than on burial sites from the pagan era; they were to be inhumed without grave goods, and feeding the souls of the dead was prohibited. A similar position was expressed by the early modern Lutheran and Catholic clergy, even though this did not correspond to the real situation in the Middle Ages or in the Early Modern Era. Judging from the archaeological evidence, the dead were buried in secular dress with grave goods, in shrouds and later in a special funeral costume, such practices being observed both by the native population of present-day Latvia, and by immigrants and their descendants.Indications of the co-existence of the two traditions and of the changes occurring in the Early Modern Era are to be found in written sources and folklore. The 1570 Statutes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia state that the dead must be dressed in modest funeral costume (*nottürftige grabkleidern*) and that in this land dressing the dead and placing them in a coffin is an ancient Christian tradition (*undin diesen landen ein alter christlicher gebrauch der verkleidung und der sarken stets gewesen ist*) (Sehling, 1913, p. 104). The Statutes of the Livland Church, from 1686, state that the faithful must be continually urged to refrain from burying the dead in an expensive funeral costume and coffin (*Das Volk soll... standmaßig zu bezeugen ... daß sie von kostbahren Sargen und Ankleidung der Todten ablassen*) (Buddenbrock, 1821, p. 1809). Essentially, these documents make reference to special funerary dress, which in the Early Modern Period replaced the shroud, although in view of the specific regional practices, it is also possible that the instructions in the church statutes refer to secular dress. Indirect evidence of the practice of burying the dead in secular dress, thought to have spread among the urban population in the Early Modern Period, is provided by the 1677 regulation on dress issued by the town of Riga, stipulating that

the dead were not to be dressed otherwise than in an ordinary burial gown and shirt (*Todten-Kittel und Hemd*) (Taube 1960, 296). Descriptions of funerals in the 16th–18th centuries give fairly extensive information concerning the practice among the native population of burying the dead in dress. For example, 16th-century sources indicate that the deceased were dressed in their own dress (*ziehen sie Inene an mit seienen kleidern*). In the 17th century Paul Einhorn, Superintendent of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia, mentions that fine dress was used (*mit guter Kleidung versehen*), whereas J. A. Brand writes at the turn of the 18th century that everyday dress was used for this purpose (*legen sie denselben in seinem gewöhnlichen habit*) (Mannhardt, 1936, pp. 257, 297, 364, 467, 607). A. W. Hupel writes in the late 18th century that only the poor bury their dead in secular dress (shirt, apron), while the rest wrap them in linen cloth (*Die Leichen weden in Leinwand gewickelt*) (Hupel 1777 II, 155). Similarly, Latvian folksongs recorded in the second half of the 19th century refer to a cloth: *Mother, give me my share*; *it's not much I need: a cloth woven with two heddles, and six wooden boards* (27419). *Fine white linen I spun, and my cloth I wove*; *my cloth I wove for to sleep in the sand* (27427) (Barons & Vissendorfs, 1909, pp. 895, 896). It is not known how old this practice is or when it was introduced. The folk songs quoted here are thought to reflect an earlier tradition, practised already in the Middle Ages. This is confirmed by research in churchyards and local cemeteries, where burials with remains of dress and grave goods occur, as well as burials without these, suggesting that burial in a shroud was also practised.

Is it possible to speak of two different cultures in Livonia in the Middle Ages and in later centuries: Western Christian and local pagan or semi-pagan? Or was the population itself divided into two or more camps on the basis of religious beliefs? The question cannot be definitively answered on the basis of archaeological evidence. It seems that the people buried in secular dress and with grave goods were not viewed as less pious, pagan or semi-Christian than those who did not follow these practices. Otherwise such graves would be absent at urban and rural churchyards, where the Church forbade the burial of pagans, heretics, godless. Instead, they would have been buried elsewhere, outside of consecrated churchyards. It is a different matter that, from the present-day perspective, we can try to evaluate the degree of religiosity and the religious views of the people of that time, assessing whether they corresponded to Christian teaching or diverged from it significantly. At the same time, we should take into account that in the Middle Ages and later, there were interpretations of the essentials of Church teaching among the ordinary faithful, reflected in the various beliefs and superstitions, that would seem incompatible today and are very remote from the contemporary understanding. A great many examples are to be

found in the medieval genre of visionary literature (Dinzelbacher, 1999; Гуревич, 1999; Le Goff, 1985). Written sources and Latvian folklore generally describe the world beyond the grave as parallel to the earthly world. It was a world where one had similar needs, and grave goods are often mentioned as provision for needs in the afterlife (Kurtz, 1925, p.

184; Mannhardt, 1936, p. 467). The Jesuit Petrus Culesius wrote in his annals of 1599 that the deceased was provided with a tool (*instrumentum*) in the grave, related to what he had done in life, so that when working in the afterlife he could continue to stave off poverty (Kleijntjenss, 1941, pp. 255, 256). According to a Latvian folk belief recorded in the late 19th century, when the deceased was laid in the grave, they were to be provided with money, bread, a set of clean underclothes and a whisk for the bath-house, so they would lack nothing in the afterlife (34140) (Šmits, 1941, p. 2063). In a sense, the grave inventory can be seen as the property of the deceased, or as part of it (*pars pro toto*). The need for grave goods stemmed from concern for the dead and fear of them, and also from the belief in a close connection between the community of the living and the dead. The origins of such beliefs go back to prehistory. However, they cannot be seen as connected exclusively with a pagan world view. A belief in the unity of the dead and the living was also characteristic of Christian medieval Europe. The Church teaching on the Communion of Saints (*Communio Sanctorum*) was literally interpreted in the Middle Ages, taken to mean that the dead are present as full-fledged members of the community and with which they have a close relationship (Oexle, 1983).

We may see as harking back to this kind of understanding and attitude towards the dead the view current in Latvia up to the present day that in the course of burial it is necessary to respect the last will and wishes of the deceased. *'That which had already been decided with regard to preparing and dressing the deceased could not be omitted, otherwise the deceased would appear in a dream and complain that he was missing these things'* (Šmits, 1940, 20904). *'You must not take any object from the dead, since otherwise they he will follow you for the rest of your life, asking for its return'* (Šmits, 1940, 20828). In this regard the grave goods served as a means of averting the ill-will of the deceased, and the evil or illnesses that could afflict people who had a connection to the deceased person. Objects that the deceased had used in life and which had come into contact with the person (a bathhouse whisk, razor, brush, comb, soap, pipe, tobacco etc.) were placed in the grave. Such items were not used after preparing the deceased in fear of misfortune, and in the 18th and 19th century this may also have had a practical, hygienic basis. *'If you comb your hair with a brush belonging to a dead person, then all your hair will fall out'* (Šmits, 1941, 34135). Grave goods and items of dress were also seen as necessary equipment for passing from earthly life to the afterlife. A church inspection record from the parish of Lazdona in 1775 notes that the Latvians would bury their dead in *pastalas* (ordinary leather sandals), so that their path to heaven would be easier (Bregžis, 1931, p. 128). A similar purpose is indicated for the provision of coins as grave goods: so that the dead could more easily

enter heaven and would be able to pay St Peter (Šmits, 1940, pp. 1278–1279; Šmits, 1941, pp. 2060, 2063).

Written sources and folklore give practically no indication of the social aspects and reasons for the provision of grave goods. In this connection we may mention the

geographical description (*Cosmographia*) of Sebastian Münster, published in 1550, which tells of Livonia and the funerary practices of the peasantry: *'When they place the deceased in the grave, they provide him with a wooden axe, food, drink and some spending money, charging him to take all of this to the next world, where he would be lord and master over the Germans, just as they have been the rulers in this world'* (Spekke, 1935, p. 242). This passage is quoted by the authors of various 16th–18th century chronicles and geographical accounts, although the practice of placing weapons in the grave was no longer being observed. Weapons (spears and axes) disappear from the grave inventory in the mid-16th century, around the same time as Münster's *Cosmographia* was published. It is possible that provision of weapons as grave goods ceased in connection with the collapse of Livonia, when the role of the native population in military activities decreased. Also, several ordinances prohibiting the keeping and bearing of arms by the peasants were issued in the 16th century (Dunsdorfs & Spekke, 1964, p. 178; Lazdiņa, 1936, pp. 42, 43). In descriptions of funerals the placement of an axe in the grave is mentioned in connection with the social tension existing in Livonia in the 16th century, the time when serfdom was coming into being, as depicted by the authors of the age of humanism. It may be thought that in the Middle Ages, on the contrary, burials with weapons indicated the social status of the deceased. These may have been the burials of members of the native population who were free peasants, vassals or their representatives, involved in military service under the Livonian Order or the bishop.

The disappearance of grave goods in medieval Western Europe is explained in terms of the change from material to spiritual care of the dead. The moveable and immovable property of the deceased was donated to churches and monasteries, so that they might hold masses and prayers for the dead, or else distributed as charity for the poor (Angenendt, 2001, p. 283; Effros, 2003, p. 116; Fehring, 1979, p. 568). At the same time, medieval written sources include examples where the description of life beyond the grave reflects archaic ideas, life after death being depicted as resembling earthly life, as a kind of materialised world. In the genre of visionary literature the depiction of life beyond the grave is modelled on the perception of the real-world space and earthly life. Paradise, hell and purgatory are not located in complete isolation from the earthly world. One could enter and leave the world beyond without crossing the boundary between life and death. An arduous journey awaited the deceased after death, with tests of a material nature: he or she had to cross a plain covered in sharp stones, spikes and thorns, a river full of sword blades or a razor-sharp otherworld bridge, for example (Dinzelbacher, 1999; Le Goff, 1985). Also, the world beyond the grave was imagined and perceived as having a similar social structure as

did earthly life (Dinzelbacher, 1979). Evidently for this reason, members of the higher social circles (rulers and clergy) were buried in their official robes along with the attributes of their status. Rulers were provided with the symbols of power: the sceptre, crown and sword; clergymen were buried with their religious equivalents: the ring, staff,

chalice, paten (Brandt, 1976; Dąbrowska, 2008; Meier, 2002). The tradition of burying the clergy in their vestments has been retained in the Catholic Church up to the present day. Thirteenth-century Church authors wrote in this connection that a clergyman's dress symbolises dignity (expressing virtues and abilities), and it is in such dress that they are presented among other people before the Lord[5]. Despite the commonplace medieval notion that the soul was sexless and naked in Heaven, a great number of written works and paintings depict Heaven as populated not only by a hierarchy, but by a clothed hierarchy (Daniell 1997, p. 156; Dinzelbacher 1979, p. 35; Dinzelbacher 1999, p. 61).

It appears that burial in dress did not essentially contradict the medieval ideas concerning life beyond the grave, although the works of late medieval Church authors (Jean Beleth (†*1182*), Sicardus of Cremona (†*1215*) and Durandus of Mende (†*1296*) specifically direct that the ordinary faithful (laity) are to be buried in a shroud, just as Christ has been laid in the grave (Migne 1855a, p. 159; Migne 1855b, p. 427; Davri & Thibodeau 2000, p. 100). This tradition was the most widespread form of burial, but not the only one. In the Middle Ages members of the upper social strata were buried in dress and with the attributes of their status, whereas in the Early Modern Era, starting from the 16th century, the practice of burial in dress and the provision of grave goods gradually also spread among the body of the faithful, both in Protestant and Catholic lands.

In this period, in view of the developments mentioned above, the differences that had existed between Livonia and the rest of Europe in the Middle Ages were reduced. A similar motivation, beliefs and traditions may be found in the Early Modern period across a wide region (Germany, Latvia, Russia and elsewhere) (Zender 1959; Kenzler 2011, pp. 28, 29; Соболев 2000, pp. 138, 139; Бузин 2007, pp. 334–345; Šmits 1940; Šmits 1941). It is difficult to explain how the early modern system of religious beliefs developed, considering that folklore and archaeological material from burial sites reflect universal ideas and similar practices. Is this an entirely new development of the Modern Era? Or does it incorporate an older stratum of beliefs that becomes more overtly expressed at this time? In the case of Latvia, the system of beliefs relating to burial practices formed over a long period of time, from prehistory right up to the Modern Era. Burial in dress and with grave goods was not interrupted in the Middle Ages, as it was across much of Europe, instead being practiced in parallel with the custom of burial in a shroud.

5.4 Conclusions

Certain burial norms (burial in parish churchyards in a shroud and without grave goods) which existed in the Middle Ages, being observed in the majority of European lands, and which are nowadays often seen as indications of the consolidation of Christianity, cannot be so unequivocally interpreted in Latvia. In the Middle Ages and Early Modern Era people strove to dress the dead in their best clothes, which they wore ordinarily or kept for festive occasions. Over the course of time, valuable objects ceased to be placed in the grave, but the dead continued to be buried in dress. This is undoubtedly a tradition inherited from prehistory, and has been retained in the area of present-day Latvia and in the neighbouring lands right up to the present. However, this practice cannot be explained as pagan, since the dead were buried in dress not only on local burial sites, but also in churchyards. Under Church law, burial in churchyards was prohibited to those such as pagans, heretics and godless people, which means that the remains of dress and grave goods found with burials cannot be interpreted so straightforwardly.

It is not entirely clear what was the deciding factor that led to the disappearance of this practice in Western Europe and elsewhere. Was it connected with a new understanding of life beyond the grave, the dead and the soul, with a change from material to spiritual care (prayers, donations to the Church and to the poor)? Or with grave-robbing, which led to a reconsideration of the necessity of grave goods? Or was it a matter simply of strict adherence to the norms laid down by rulers and the Church? After all, why did burial in dress and with grave goods re-appear in the Modern Era? It is possible that burial in dress, together with personal items, was not seen as a tradition that expressly contradicted Christian teaching. In the Middle Ages, it was rulers and clergymen who were buried in dress, whereas in the Early Modern Era burial in dress also spread among the ordinary faithful, the laity. Thus, while burial within a shroud can be regarded as the most widespread form of burial in the Middle Ages, it was not the only one. Evidently, this criterion which is widely used in the study of religious life, cannot be taken as an absolute indicator in Latvia and the nearest neighbouring countries. The course and preconditions of Christianisation differed between peoples and lands. The Christian Church emerged and developed on the basis of the earlier religious beliefs, retaining specific characteristics in each region (The Cross Goes North 2005). Evidently, in the lands of the Baltic and Finnic peoples burial in dress and with grave goods, reflecting the syncretic nature of the religious life of the native

population, was preserved as a local tradition under the Christian Church in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Era.

Translated by Valdis Bērziņš

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1 The statutes of the Riga Latvian Fraternity of Bearers in 1450, state that: 'Should a brother of this guild or association die, drown or be killed in Riga or within a mile of the city, all the brothers shall assemble and accompany the deceased with candles and a funeral pall to his grave' (Stieda & Mettig, 1896, p. 416).

2 Medieval burials sometimes have coins, for example the burials of Riga Cathedral (Berga & Celmiņš, 1998), and the grave of Andreas Stenberg, Landmarschall of the Livonian Order (†1375), in Aizkraukle Church (Stepiņš, 1943). The grave of Archbishop of Riga Michael Hildebrand(†1509) in the cloisters of Riga Cathedral had the remains of the vestments (the chasuble), a coin and fragments from a chalice or other object of tin placed in the grave (Jaksch, 1893).

3 [...] quod ipsi vel heredes eorum in mortuis comburendis vel subterrandis cum equis sive hominibus vel cum armis seu vestibus vel quibuscunque aliis preciosis, vel eciam in aliis ritus gentilium de cetero non servabunt, sed mortuos suos iuxta morem christianorum in cymiteriis sepelient et non extra [...] (Švābe, 1940, pp. 283, 287).

4 [...] antiquum gentilitatis morem a nonnullis neophitis sive rusticis hujus patrie hucusque abusive continuatum, quo sacrata cimiteria contempnendo preeligunt se in campis silvestribus cum feris sepeliri ac eciam in quibusdam locis prophanis, ubi ipsorum parentes et amici sue gentilitatis temporibus sunt sepulti, et eciam plerumque in ecclesiis et cimiteriis consecratis convivia preparant, defunctis eorum parentibus et amicis cibu met potum exhibentes, credentes hoc in eorum cedere consolationem, alisque diversas sue gentilitatis perfidias ibidem exercentes [...] (LUB VII, 690: 19 doc.).

5 [...] vestes enim sacerdotales virtutes significant, cum quibus prae caeteris sunt Domino praesentandi [...] (Migne, 1855a, p.427; Davri & Thibodeau, 2000, p. 100).

Joseph M. Gonzalez

6 Fashioning Death: Clothing, Memory and Identity in 16th Century Swedish Funerary Practice

Introduction

King Gustav Vasa was married three times. In 1531, less than a decade after his election as King of Sweden, he made a match calculated to boost his prestige and help consolidate his position as king and married Katarina von Sax-Lauenburg, the daughter of Duke Magnus and a relative of the emperor. She bore the king one son, Erik, and died suddenly in 1535 (Svalenius, 1992). After her death, the king married the daughter of one of the most powerful noble houses in Sweden, Margareta Eriksdotter Leijonhufvud in 1536. Queen Margareta bore the king eight children before she died in 1551. By August of 1552, the fifty-six year old Gustav Vasa had found a new queen, the 16-year-old Katarina Gustavsdotter Stenbock, daughter of another of Sweden's leading noble houses. Despite the youth of his bride, the marriage bore no children and the old king died eight years later (Svalenius, 1992). The king's death occasioned a funeral of unprecedented magnificence that was unique both in its scale and in its promotion of the Vasa dynasty's image and interests. Unique to Vasa's funeral was the literal incorporation of the bodies of his two deceased wives in the ceremony. They shared his bed-like hearse on the long road to Uppsala and the single copper casket that was interred in the cathedral crypt.

Six months after the funeral, Gustav Vasa's son with Katarina von Sax-Lauenburg, Erik, was crowned king. Surprisingly, in one of his first official acts as king, Erik XIV commissioned an official history, or *Relation*, of his father's elaborate funeral. The importance of the inclusion of Gustav Vasa's queens is evidenced by the fact that the author of the *Relation* did not simply note the presence of the queens' bodies; he provided a detailed description of the preparation of the body of queen Katarina for the funeral. The significance of this aspect of the funeral is further evidenced by its privileged location in the *Relation's* second paragraph and by its presentation in scholarly Latin, in contrast to the Swedish used for the majority of the *Relation*. The section reads:

> *Clauditur hoc in Sarcophago diua Katharina inuictissimi Suecorum Gothorum ac Vandalorum Regis diui Gostaui prima vxor, Et Erici mater, quæ carnis humanæ viam ingress 1535 Cum Holmiæ in fano diui Nicolai 25 annos reposita fuiset in*

sacrario, a Joanne *duce Finlandiæ diui Gostaui ex diui Margareta secunda vxor fillio, nouis vestibus sceptro et corona redimita, in hocque nouo sarcophago* .
(Olson, 1956, p. 66-67)

reposita, ex mariti cum adhuc viuerat et filij tunc regnatis, vna cum diuo Gostauo Rege marito suo Vpsaliam translate fuit, Anno et die supra prænotato etc. (Olson, 1956, p. 66-67)[1]

Translated this reads as (some punctuation added):

> Enclosed within this sarcophagus [is] blessed (deceased) Katarina the first wife of blessed (deceased) Gustav the invincible king of the Swedes, Goths, and Vandals, and mother to Eric. Her mortal flesh was interred in 1535 in Stockholm in the Temple of Saint Nicholas [Storkyrkan] and reposed for 25 years in the sacristy. Johan, duke of Finland, son of the blessed Gustav and blessed Margareta, his second wife, clothed her [Katerina] anew and restored [her] sceptre and crown and placed her in this new sarcophagus. Her son [Erik] by her husband [Gustav] yet lives and rules this kingdom. Together with her husband, the blessed Gustav, she was translated to Uppsala in the year and day noted above ...

Why did Johan disturb a long-dead corpse and provide it with a new dress? Why did Erik include the preparation of his mother's body for reburial among those things that he wished to be remembered by future generations? What purpose could this memory possibly serve?

In 1943, the graves of the early Vasas were opened and subjected to a thorough scientific investigation as part of the ongoing restoration of Uppsala Cathedral (Olsson, 1956). When the coffins of Gustav Vasa and his two queens, Katarina Sax-Lauenburg and Margareta Leijonhufvud were opened, it was discovered that the bodies of both queens, not just Katerina, had been subject to repeated dressing and re-dressing prior to their final interment at Gustav Vasa's side in 1560 (Olsson, 1956). The fate of the queen's bodies, their interment, repeated disinterment, clothing, and re-clothing in the decades before they finally found rest at the side of Gustav Vasa is an odd but significant chapter in the history of the early Vasa monarchy. It reflects both the transformation in ritual and doctrine that accompanied the Reformation of the Swedish church and the growing ambitions of the Vasa dynasty. I would also argue that the fate of these women's bodies demonstrates the Vasa princes' awareness of the power of history – of memory – to give meaning to the present and to shape the future. Their treatment of the queens' bodies was a literal *re-membering* or reconstruction of history that did not differ dramatically from the historical manipulation common to the literary products of the royal chancellery or the public ritual demonstrations of the coronation and the royal funeral. The repeated re-clothing of the queens' bodies involved the literal reconstitution and reassignment of meaning and identity and this

process facilitated the creation of very specific types of memory. However, because the re-clothed bodies were never intended for public display, we can assume that this memory was private – or intended for a very limited audience. Ultimately, I would argue, the fashioning of the queens' corpses reveals a part of the process by which the Vasa princes fashioned their public and private selves (Greenblatt, 2005).

Historians since Kantorowicz and Giesey have explored the ways in which the royal mortuary practices related to both the representation of power relationships and to shifting understandings of the human body (Bertelli, 2001; Giesey, 1960; Kantorowicz, 1957; Strocchia, 1992; Woodward, 1997). The overwhelming preponderance of this literature has focused on the bodies of kings and male members of the political elite. This paper contributes to this discourse, but extends the focus of study to feminine bodies, and to queens specifically, and thereby participates in recent scholarship on women and power (Gold, 1985; Grönhammar, 1999; Poutrin & Schaub, 2007; Stafford, 1983). The fashioning and refashioning of the women's bodies to create specific types of memory brings that set of practices within the ambit of work on renaissance 'self-fashioning' (Greenblatt, 2005), self-representation (Crane, 2002; Hayward, 2007; Jones & Stallybrass, 2000; Rubin, 2007) and historiography (Johannesson, 1969-1970, 1991).

Traditional document-based historical method faces limits when brought to bear on questions concerning feminine bodies and royal power, the process of self-fashioning or the generation of representations of royal power in the 16th century. In many cases documentation is scarce or nonexistent, and where it exists it frequently provides a limited perspective. The tombs of the early Vasa princes are a rich source of material evidence that shed light on these elusive elements of Swedish history. Gustav Vasa's seminal role in the development of the Swedish state ensured his tomb's preservation to the present and, though the funerary chapel itself has been subject to considerable remodelling, the tomb monument executed 1562-1583 and the graves themselves have been well protected and preserved (Sjöholm, 1982). A thorough scientific examination of the tomb, crypt, and royal remains was carried out in 1945-1946 by a team of researchers including archeologists, historians, art historians, anatomists, radiologists and historians. The remains of Gustav Vasa, his three wives Katarina von Sax-Lauenburg, Margareta Leijonhufvud and Katarina Stenbock, his son and successor Johan II, and his second wife Gunilla Bielke were exhumed together with their funerary paraphernalia. The remains were subject to a thorough examination and conservation before being returned to their original places in the crypt where they remain to the current day (Olsson, 1956).

Gustav Vasa selected Uppsala cathedral to be the necropolis for the

kings of Sweden based on a number of factors. The cathedral was the seat of Sweden's pre-eminent ecclesiastical authority and it had associations with the mythic Gothic kings and with the sainted king Erik Jedvardsson (d. 1160). But for a variety of reasons his son Johan III and his two wives, Katerina Jagellonica and Gunilla Bielke, were the only other members of the Vasa dynasty to be buried in the cathedral. Nevertheless,

Gustav Vasa's funeral ritual and his interment in a crypt, was widely imitated by his successors and by the high nobility. The use of crypts protected the remains and facilitated periodic examination of the tombs and their contents by clerics, high status visitors, and researchers. Though Queen Katerina Jagollonica's remains have not (to my knowledge) been subject to close scientific study, her grave goods, including her personal jewellery and funerary regalia, have been removed from her tomb and are on display in the Uppsala cathedral treasury (Sjöholm, 1982).

The overwhelming majority of medieval Swedish kings and queens elected for interment in their preferred monastic institutions and, with a few exceptions, the precise location of their graves has been lost for centuries. In some cases the reputations of the kings or political considerations helped to keep the memory of their burial place alive; for instance the graves of King Magnus Ladulås (d. 1290) and Karl Knutsson Bonde (d. 1470) that are located in the former Franciscan convent church in Stockholm known today as Riddarholm's church (Riddarholmskyrkan). Their graves were excavated and subject to extensive study starting in 1915 (Fürst & Olsson, 1921). The graves of Sweden's early modern rulers, Erik XIV, Gustav II Adolf, Karl X Gustav, Karl XI, Karl XII, and Gustav III have all been opened and subject to varying degrees of scrutiny most frequently in connection with church restoration projects (Casparsson et al., 1962; Curman & Roosval, 1937; Janson, 2004). Of these, Erik XIV and Karl XII have been subject to the closest study. In both of these cases the primary interest has been in determining who or what killed the king. Otherwise, the tombs have been the subject of art historical description, conservation and restoration. This paper is a departure from the majority of previous work on Sweden's royal tombs in that the focus is on recovering aspects on the cultural and intellectual world of the late 16th century particularly with regard to the construction of royal power and understandings of the female body.

6.1 Remembering the King

Gustav Vasa was born into one of the most powerful of clans that dominated Swedish politics under the Danish-led Kalmar Union. In the wake of the Stockholm Bloodbath, he assumed leadership of Swedish forces fighting for independence from the Danish crown, defeating the Danish King Christian II in 1523. Shortly after his victory, he was elected King of Sweden (Svalenius, 1992). As monarch, Gustav Vasa laboured tirelessly to unify the Kingdom and to provide it with a government and an identity capable of withstanding internal divisions and external

threats. In the process, he made a number of radical breaks with Swedish tradition; most significantly, he broke with the religious leadership of Rome and transformed the monarchy from an elective to a hereditary form (Behre & Österberg, 1994). These changes ultimately transformed Sweden from a province to a state, laying the foundations for future political, economic and cultural developments, but at the time they became a source of gnawing insecurity. The king was well aware that he was viewed as a noble upstart and that

the Danish king and his allies watched his every move. Consequently, when Gustav Vasa died in the early morning hours of September 29, 1560, both his subjects and his heirs received the news of his passing with sorrow and considerable trepidation (Ordinarius, 1905). His death placed the new political and religious order in jeopardy and fueled fears that the fledgling state would descend into the chaos of civil war or to the horrors of foreign invasion. However, at the same time, his death presented a potent opportunity for the young Vasa dynasty to further its own political agenda by presenting a carefully crafted recasting of the life and deeds of the dead king that would buttress their own claims and ambitions.

Erik could best achieve that reframing of his father's legacy in the royal funeral ceremony, a quintessential occasion for memory. The deceased may be eulogized, his or her memory elaborated and codified, and by this process the funeral's participants can ratify an official account or story of the deceased. The ritual context provided a particularly powerful opportunity to shape the history of Gustav Vasa because the formalized, distinctly non-quotidian sequence of actions enabled the performers' ability to represent and thereby actualize an intangible ideal, or in this case, a memory (Geertz, 1973). Erik's awareness of the power of memory – of history – are reflected in the opening sentences of the *Relation*, that begins with an invocation that states:

> *Thetta efterscreffna och till minnes antechnat for effterkommandenar skull …*
> (Linköpings Stadsbiblioteck MS T131 F.1., n.d.; Peringsköld, 1791).
>
> (This text is written so that [our] descendants will remember …)

The ruling classes of the Renaissance had a keen appreciation of the power of memory – of history – to shape the world they lived in. When the Swedish clergyman Olaus Petri began his Swedish Chronicle sometime in the 1530s, he did so with a passage that highlighted this awareness:

> *Gudh som all ting haffuer skapat menniskione til godho och gagn, han haffuer the tock aff sinne ewiga godheet och försyyn så förordinerat och skickat, at theres liffuerne och regemente som fordom dags i werldenne leffuat haffua bescriffuas skulle, theres epterkommandom til en rettilse och warnagel, aff huilkom the lära motte…* (Petri, 1917, p. 1)
>
> (God who has fashioned all things for the good and benefit of his people, has of his eternal goodness and foresight so ordained that the lives of men and their deeds of days gone by should be written down as an example and warning from which they may learn …)

Petri's view is typical of his age. He perceives history as a kind of useful remembering and, as he elucidates in later pages, an overtly political act. The Vasa princes unquestionably shared his understanding of the power of history. From the earliest years of Gustav Vasa's reign, his Chancellery produced propaganda in Swedish, German, and Latin in the form of open letters, broadsheets, songs ['visor'] and

scholarly polemic in Swedish, German and Latin; all based on the artful re-telling of recent events and history (Johannesson, 1969-1970).

In the case of Gustav Vasa's funeral as recalled in the *Relation*, precisely what Erik wished to be remembered, and by whom, is a surprisingly complicated issue. He wanted different individuals and groups to remember different things, and this becomes evident in his account. On one hand, Erik clearly intended to memorialise the magnificence of the ritual that honoured his father (and his memory). However, Erik's notation of the particular families in attendance documented their loyalty and the support they had given the king, his father, in life and bound them to his memory. Erik thereby established a precedent for the nobility's participation in the Vasa regime by fixing another memory, that of their participation in the ritual expression of the regime as elaborated in the funeral ritual. In other words the funeral account was intended to fix the memory not only of the funeral, but also of bonds of fealty and allegiance.

Not surprisingly, Gustav Vasa's funeral was the most elaborate that had ever been staged for a Swedish monarch (Gonzalez, 1999; Usthall, n.d.). It was carefully crafted as a response to the contemporaneous conditions in Sweden, and as a remedy for the general atmosphere of fear and uncertainty at the time of his death. The king's body lay in state for eight long weeks, during which frenzied preparation took place for the two-day-long procession that would transport the bodies to Uppsala cathedral for burial. Lifelike effigies of Gustav Vasa and his two defunct queens were commissioned from the leading artists in Sweden together with heraldic devices, a *castrum doloris* and lavish hangings to transform the royal palace and the cathedral into suitable expressions of mourning and royal glory. When all of the parts were assembled in the context of the royal funeral, the totality constituted a discourse centred on four main ideas: the unity of the Swedish realm, the victory of the Reformed Church, the legitimacy of the Vasa dynasty and the hereditary monarchy, and Sweden's full and equal participation in European culture and politics. The ritual was a communal act of remembrance that was intended to cast Gustav Vasa's history as a powerful exemplum of royal power that aimed at shaping the past and the future.

Erik XIV's appreciation of the power of history and ritual derived from a solidly humanist education. His father, concerned that his sons be true princes, recruited the Wittenberg-trained humanist George Norman to serve as their tutor (Andersson, 1993; Hoffordenung, 1539/1890). Though Norman's attentions were shortly consumed by matters of church and state, he did complete a programme for the prince's education that was designed specifically to shape the heirs of the nobleman, Gustav Vasa, into ideal princes. Latin and the catechism formed the core of the princes' daily lessons; but their course of study

also included texts that were considered relevant to their moral and vocational development: Aesop's fables, passages from scripture – the wisdom of Solomon in particular – and selected classical texts and histories that exemplified virtue or that were recognized for their intellectual value (Hoffordenung, 1539/1890). The study of history was particularly prominent as is evidenced by the

long list of classical and contemporary works of history listed among the purchases made for the princes' court. According to the humanists, history was essential to the education of princes because it provided exempla, or models, for behavior. History, in other words, was not simply the repetition of the tales of old kings and heroic deeds; rather, it required both internalising the lessons and morality extracted from the tales and enacting them in appropriate situations. In Norman's writings, this point is made explicitly. Borrowing from ideas expressed in Cicero's *On Obligation*, the royal tutor strove to instill *eloquentia corporis* (Cicero, trans. 2000; Johannesson, 1980). The princes were taught not just to think like princes, but also to act like princes; and acting like a prince literally meant that they were encouraged to model the examples of princely virtue found in their books (Hoffordenung, 1539/1890; Johannesson, 1980). The lessons that the princes learned intellectually were expressed physically, acted out in endless repetition in the rituals of the court. For Erik XIV and his brothers, the training that they received as children had particular relevance to the design and execution of the funeral of their father, the king.

6.2 Brides for a King

Within a year of his coronation as king of Sweden, Gustav Vasa began his search for a bride that would bolster his reputation, foster political connections and allegiances, and provide him with heirs. Following lengthy negotiations, Katarina von Sax-Lauenburg, the daughter of a princely house with ties to the Holy Roman Emperor arrived in Sweden in 1531 and married Gustav Vasa on her 18th birthday. Two years later, the queen gave birth to a son, Prince Erik. Then, writes Peder Svart (1870: 174), *af hwilken önskelige födelse heela rijkit blef vpfylt med frögd och gläd*je*, och Konung Gustafz regemente blef ther igenom mykit styrkt och stadfest* … (of this longed for birth the whole realm was filled with rejoicing and happiness and King Gustav's government [rule] was much strengthened and secured…)

Though documentary evidence of Katarina's years in Sweden is sparse, tradition has long held that the marriage was unhappy. The queen died in 1535 amid rumors that the king had beaten her to death (Svalenius, 1992). Contemporary Swedish sources mention Katarina's death only in passing and provide no real details concerning her funeral or burial. The chronicler Erik Tegel recorded that she was buried in Storkyrkan and a long-vanished document published by the antiquarian Peringskiöld in the 18th century indicates that her grave was located in the choir north of the altar (Larsson, 2002; Olsson, 1956). Gustav Vasa remarried within a year of Katarina's death. This time, his bride was

Margareta Eriksdotter Leijonhufvud, the daughter of one of the most powerful noble families in Sweden. Tradition holds that this marriage was extremely happy – though there is no real evidence to support this view. It was, regardless, certainly very fruitful. Within a year of their wedding, Margareta gave birth to a son, Johan, and went on to produce nine more children in

the years before her death in 1551 (Larsson, 2002). The intervening years were busy in other ways as well. The Reformation of the Swedish Church, begun at Västerås in 1527, had overcome any initial resistance and Lutheran theology and ritual forms had come to dominate Swedish religious life (Andrén, 1999; Grell, 1995). Vasa had emerged victorious from the various challenges to his rule posed by the Danes and his rebellious subjects – most seriously, the insurrection led by Nils Dacke in 1542 (Larsson, 2002). With the consolidation of his power accomplished, Vasa moved to secure the elective throne of Sweden for his heirs forever, and at the Riksdag of Västerås in 1544, the Swedish estates vowed to recognize Gustav Vasa's sons as their hereditary kings (Larsson, 2002). Yet despite all of his domestic achievement, Gustav Vasa and his sons were acutely aware that the majority of the ruling houses of Europe still viewed them as 'noble upstarts' and encouraged them in their efforts to achieve recognition by acting like kings, looking like kings, and developing scholarly proofs of their dynastic worthiness.

When Queen Margareta failed to recover from the birth of her youngest child and died in 1551, the ritual response to her passing was dramatically different from that provided for Queen Katerina. Queen Margareta died in the castle of the Bishop of Strängnäs. The king's initial plan was to bury her in the local cathedral, and he immediately issued orders for the preparation of a grave. However, two days later, he countermanded those orders and sent a letter to his son Erik, saying:

> K. M:tt achter late begraffve vår alder nådigeste fru I Stockholm, at than förthenskuld later uptage drottning Katerina och sättie henne in I sakerstijgen... (Olsson, 1956, pp. 69–70)
>
> ([His] Royal Majesty commands that our most gracious lady wife be buried in Stockholm, and that for this reason he [Erik] should disinter queen Katerina and place her in the sacristy [of Storkyrkan].)

Funerals seem suddenly to have been very much on the king's mind. An undated letter from Erik to his father in 1551 indicates that the king had decided to be buried in Uppsala, that a burial crypt in the chapel behind the choir was in preparation, and that stone sarcophagi had been commissioned to contain the remains of his two queens (Gillgren, 2009; Olsson, 1956). This represents a clear shift from earlier practice and reflects the recently elevated status of the Vasa dynasty to hereditary princes. A hereditary house required a pedigree. What better way to manifest the Vasa bloodline than in monuments made of stone? Similarly, the ritual that accompanied Queen Margareta was far more elaborate than that provided for her predecessor. A flurry of correspondence between Erik and his father indicates that the funeral was the subject of meticulous planning that was undertaken with the

help of the Wittenberg-trained humanist George Norman. Yet despite the elaborate funeral, the queen was not buried. Her body, dressed in a plain gown of black velvet and bearing a crown and sceptre of gilt wax, would lie in the sacristy of Storkyrkan for nearly a decade before she would come to her final resting place (Olsson, 1956). In the meantime, Prince Erik

obeyed his father's command and disinterred the body of his mother from the place where it had rested for sixteen years beside the choir in Stockholm's cathedral. In an undated letter from 1551 he writes:

> *I dag, när kisten, ther min kiäre fru moderss salig ihukommelse affsompnede lechame udi lagd var, up aff graffven tagin bleff, befantz, att kisten och vaxduken våre så förrothne, att hon ecke flyties eller föres kunde, dherföre bliffver nu en ny kiste giordh, ther then gamble innen i sättias skall, oc sedan bliffve bedragen umkring med nye vaxduker*…. (Olsson, 1956, p. 65)
>
> (Today when the coffin containing my dear lady mother of blessed memory's dead [*affsompnede*] body was uncovered and taken up out of the grave it was found that the coffin and waxed cloth [oil cloth] was so rotten that she could not be moved. Therefore shall a new coffin be made to contain the old one and then covered in new wax cloth…)

Erik then requested that his father send supplies and cloth-of-gold for the bier and to cover the coffin. When Queen Katarina was installed in her new coffin she joined Queen Margareta in the sacristy where she would wait for nine years before finally going to her final resting place in the crypt of Uppsala cathedral.[2] Indeed, when the grave was opened in 1943, the truly extraordinary nature of Erik's impact on his mother's remains was brought to light. Erik's was the first of two interventions undertaken to repair the body previous to the funeral of Gustav Vasa in 1560. When her coffin was opened, the queen's body was found within the 'new' coffin dressed in two layers of clothing. The outermost layer was the gown in which the queen was dressed in 1560. Under this dress was a second gown of black velvet. Importantly, the body was not wearing the gown. The garment had been made in such a way that it might be tucked in around the corpse and thus present the illusion that the body was dressed. When the grave was examined, there was no evidence of earlier clothing (Olsson, 1956). This is interesting because in contemporary practice (e.g. Queen Margareta) corpses were routinely dressed after death. However, in this case the queen's garment seems to have been applied after the body had decomposed. This thesis is strengthened by the fact that part of the body's right arm was displaced and lay under the pillow that supported the queen's head (Olsson, 1956). But if this dress was placed on the body when Erik restored the coffin, where is the original dress?

In medieval Sweden, it was customary to bury the deceased naked, wrapped in a shroud (Fürst & Olsson, 1921; Troels-Lund, 1984). Queen Katarina died only a few short years after the beginning of the Reformation and before new theological understandings of the afterlife of the body took hold. During the Catholic period, the doctrine of purgatory seemed to suggest that divine judgment took place immediately

after death (Reinis, 2007; Troels-Lund, 1984). Given this view, it is not surprising that the corpse held little importance and most were evidently consigned to their eternal rest wearing a simple shroud of oilcloth (Magnus, 2001; Olsson, 1956). However, with the advent of Lutheranism, beliefs and customs changed. With the elimination of purgatory, the fate of souls awaiting the last judgment had to be re-evaluated. Ultimately, Martin Luther decided that the souls of the deceased slept while awaiting resurrection on the last day (Altjaus, 1963). The impact of these ideas on Swedish perceptions of death is indicated by the increased use of the term *avsomna* to indicate death. But if the dead were just sleeping, then a new treatment of the dead body was also mandated. It is very probable that queen Katarina was originally buried according to the medieval custom, in a simple shroud. The shift in religious doctrine and concurrent evolution of the view of dead bodies is mirrored in Erik's attention to his mother's body; according to Olsson (1956), he supplied her with both a dress and a pillow!

However, beyond the theological significance of Erik's actions, the dressing of the queen's body also has wider implications in terms of understandings of the body and the construction of memory (Crane, 2002; Hayword, 2007; Jones & Stallybrass, 2000; Rubin, 2007). The velvet dress that was tucked around her remains was a garment fit for a queen and its bestowal endowed a desiccated corpse with significance, a social status, and an identity. Mouldering remains became a queen, and Erik, who can hardly have remembered his mother alive, constructed a proof of his royal origins. Just how far Erik and his brother Johan were willing to pursue this process became fully apparent nine years later with the death of their father, Gustav Vasa, on September 29, 1560. While the court engaged in frenzied preparations for the king's funeral, Erik commanded that his mother's coffin be opened once more and the body refurbished in preparation for its final burial. Though the official account commissioned by Erik only mentions the body of Queen Katarina, when the graves were opened in 1943, it became apparent that the body of Queen Margareta had also been subject to considerable attention. During the preparations for Vasa's funeral in 1560, Queen Katarina was provided with a new dress that was constructed in a like manner to the garment in which she was dressed in 1551 (i.e., it consisted only of a front piece that was tucked around the body to give the appearance of clothing); but this dress was considerably more elaborate and far more costly. The dress was made of Lucca velvet, the highest possible quality available at that time, and in a design consistent with contemporary European court fashion. Whereas the earlier dress was unadorned, this dress was trimmed with a three-centimeter broad gold ribbon around the neck, around the arms, and along the hem. Three crowned silver-gilt initials, K[aterina], R[egina], S[uecia] were stitched to

the breast and each of the crowns was set with three pearls (Olsson, 1956). If this dress left any doubt as to the regal nature of its bearer those doubts would have at once been dispelled by the silver-gilt crown that was placed on the queen's head over a cap made of cloth of gold. The queen's body was also provided with a sceptre that had a handle set with pearls (Olsson, 1956).

Interestingly, the crown that was placed on Katarina's head was different from any that she had worn in life. The medieval Swedish kings wore open crowns and Gustav Vasa seems to have followed this tradition (Cedarström, 1942). But this crown was of the closed, or imperial, type that was growing in popularity throughout Europe (Olsson, 1956). It was a symbolic claim of equality with the other older and more established royal houses of Europe, which is all the more striking because of its novelty. It is also interesting that while the notoriously parsimonious Gustav Vasa had furnished his second wife with symbolic regalia made of wax, Erik invested in the real thing. The new regalia were made of silver and gold and set with pearls. Yet these objects of considerable material value were intended for a very limited audience. Only the individuals directly involved in the process of refurbishing the queen's bodies would have seen the queen's finery or her new regalia.

Prince Johan also refurbished the coffin of his mother, Queen Margareta, though whether he did so at Erik's command is unclear. Like Queen Katarina, Margareta was provided with a new dress that was a mere front piece that could be tucked over the original dress that contained the body of the queen. This dress was made of black velvet of a common quality that was also used to upholster the coffins and to make various drapes and hangings (notably for the horses) that were used in the funeral ritual. The queen's dress was of slightly different design than Katarina's; it had puffy sleeves trimmed with 23mm of broad gold ribbon that provided an elegant touch, but that was markedly narrower then the ribbon that decorated Queen Katarina's gown. The same ribbon trimmed the hem (Olsson, 1956). Three silver-gilt crowned initials were sewn to the bodice, M[argareta], R[egina], S[uecia], but in contrast to those that ornamented Queen Katarina, the crowns were not set with pearls. When Margareta died in 1551, she was provided a crown and sceptre of gilt wax. These had decayed in the years since her death and were now replaced with a silver-gilt crown of the closed type and a sceptre of design similar to those given Queen Katarina, but without the inset pearls (Olsson, 1956).

The people of the Renaissance were well-accustomed to reading clothing, and the humanist-trained Vasa princes had been educated since birth in the rhetorical process by which meaning is created (Barthes, 1985; Johannesson, 1980). The differences in the queens' ensembles are subtle but obvious, and were very clearly intentional. Everything from the quality of the fabric to the details of decoration serves to distinguish the women in very specific ways. Queen Katarina's dress was made of better quality fabric and was trimmed with broader gold ribbon than that of Margareta, whose jewellery and sceptre is of simpler design and lacks the pearls that decorate Katarina's regalia. The message is clear: Katarina was the daughter of a princely family;

Margareta was only ‘common’ nobility. Even more interesting is the fact that Katarina’s sceptre has ornamentation identical to that borne by the king, and the velvet used for her dress was also used to make Gustav Vasa’s burial robe and the suit of clothes worn by Prince Erik when he followed his parents’ coffins to their final resting place (Olsson, 1956). In other words, Erik was not content simply to distinguish

his mother's lofty pedigree: he was clearly highlighting his royal birth through the construction of a material connection between himself and his parents. At a moment of tremendous dynastic insecurity, when the principle of hereditary monarchy was as yet untested, Erik moved to reinforce his claim to the throne by creating a material link between himself and his royal parents: he was literally cut from the same cloth.

But who was this message for? The crowds that viewed the funeral procession would have remarked the quality of the velvet worn by the prince, but they could not have known that it matched the outfits worn by his parents in their coffins. Though Gustav's body lay in state for eight weeks, the queens' bodies were badly decomposed and there was clearly never any intention of displaying them. The individuals who would have known what dresses the queens wore cannot have been many. Yet it is clear from the account Erik commissioned of his father's funeral that this specific fact was one of the things that he wanted to be remembered. Why? The text offers us several clues. First, unlike most of the account, the section that reports the restoration of Queen Katarina's coffin is in Latin. This means that it was meant for an educated audience and was not intended for general consumption. Prince Johan is specifically named as the person who was responsible for the preparation of the queen's body for Vasa's funeral and he was arguably among the most learned men in Sweden. He would have been intimately familiar with the process of preparing the bodies – and it cannot have been pleasant!

The intense rivalry between Erik and Johan is well documented. Johan, who through his mother could lay claim to bonds of kinship with many of the most powerful Swedish noble clans, represented a real threat to Erik's claim to the throne. The monarchy had previously been elective and Johan's family ties presented him with a clear advantage, one that he would exploit in 1568 when he overthrew Erik and claimed the throne (Larsson, 2005). Erik was very aware of the threat posed by his brother and it is probable that Prince Erik intended the message of the queens' bodies for his brother, and perhaps for his half siblings and their families.

In *De Oratore*, Cicero has Crassus argue that ideas 'can be most easily retained in the mind if they are also conveyed to our minds by the mediation of our eyes.' He makes the argument that if an orator creates an image that it will shape a thought, and therefore it has tremendous persuasive power. In fact, he argues, it may even convince the audience of a belief that is opposite to their original opinion (Khoury, 2009). The most convincing of arguments, according to Quintilian (as cited in Khoury, 2009, p. 249), are provided by history:

> The advantage derived from the knowledge of historical facts and precedents, with which it is desirable that our orator should be acquainted; for such knowledge will

save him from having to acquire all his evidence from his client and will enable him to draw much that is germane to his case from the careful study of antiquity. And such arguments will be all the more effective, since they alone will be above suspicion of prejudice or partiality.

The dressing of the queens was part of a rhetorical process directed by Erik in which corpses were endowed with identity and meaning. It was a literal re-membering of history in which Johan came face to face with an image – history in its most literal form. The argument, the memory, the precedent, was absolutely clear and irrefutable. The long dead Queen Katarina was of royal blood – Queen Margareta was merely noble. Erik thus had a clear and undeniable right to the crown of Sweden. This was ultimately what Erik wanted to be remembered. He was his father's eldest son, and the only son of royal blood. He and he alone had right to the crown of Sweden as its true hereditary prince. The proof was his body.

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1 This account exists in various manuscript copies that exhibit slight variations though they contain essentially the same material. The so-called Linköping Manuscript is thought to be closest to the original document commissioned by Erik XIV. It contains a lengthy Latin introduction announcing the king's death and the great solemnities that were celebrated to commemorate his passing and remarks on the inclusion of his two defunct wives in the ritual. It then proceeds directly to a description in Latin of the renovation of the queens' coffins and bodies previous to the funeral. It does not include as much genealogical material as other versions, such as Peringsköld.

2 It should be noted that this translation of human remains would have been extremely unusual in a Swedish context. Though there is evidence that noble families in some circumstances moved grave monuments from defunct churches to active churches during the Reformation (Hamner, 1933), I know of no instance where the remains of any other lay person were treated in a similar manner.

Heiki Valk

7 Tradition-based Concepts of Death, Burial and Afterlife: A Case from Orthodox Setomaa, South-Eastern Estonia

Introduction

Interpreting the archaeological record is an eternal question for archaeology. One way to escape it is to remain limited by presenting data in a descriptive manner, but such an approach does not pave the way for deeper comprehension. To understand the record, different tools should be used for interpretations. Concerning burial archaeology of post-medieval times, ethnological and folkloric data can be of great value, especially if originating from a geographically and culturally close tradition-based context. If customs recorded in burial archaeology correspond to those known from folkloric or ethnological context, oral data can provide an extra dimension for understanding the former concepts of death and afterlife, also in reference to the spheres that are not reflected in the archaeological record at all, thus putting some flesh on the bones of burial archaeology.

The cultural convergence of Europe has unified the concepts of death and afterlife in two powerful waves. First, in the context of Christianization, and second in the frameworks of modernization and secularization, especially since the 20th century. As the result, earlier concepts of death and burial, those emerging with their roots from pre-Christian times, have disappeared or have been pushed to the fringes of memory. However, peripheral areas where cultural processes have been slower and old traditions had a longer persistence, sometimes enable the researchers to look into the past with death concepts totally different from both those of modern times, as well as of those of Christian character.

7.1 Funeral Rites and Burial in Estonia – Archaeology, Folklore and Living Practices

In the broader context of medieval and post-medieval Europe, the territory of Estonia, the northernmost of the three Baltic countries, was a

periphery, both in geographic and cultural terms. The land, inhabited by people speaking not an Indo-European, but a Finnic language, was Christianized only in the early 13th century (1208–1227), in the course of the Baltic Crusades, and connected with the core areas of Europe up to the early 20th century only through the upper, German part of the society. In Estonia, because of the deep ethno-social conflict of the native population and the German-

speaking nobility, dual faith and syncretism of Christian and pre-Christian beliefs can be observed up to the 19th century (Valk, 2003). The old traditions survived long also in the field of burial customs whereby local village cemeteries, illegal in the Lutheran context, were broadly in use up to the 1720s (Valk, 2001, pp. 18–37). Village cemeteries of medieval and post-medieval times have often served as objects of archaeological research. Archaeological record from the churchyards ends even later. In the province of Livonia the practice of burial there was only prohibited in 1773 in the context of Enlightenment ideas (Hausmann, 1903, pp. 150–151). As the temporal gap between archaeology and folklore is rather short in Estonia, oral tradition offers here a good chance to interpret post-medieval and medieval burial rites and grave finds. Some aspects of burial customs, however, have much earlier origins.

The rural graves of Estonia from the Christian period contain several artefacts – there exist numerous finds both from the village cemeteries and churchyards (Valk, 1995a, pp. 141–149; Valk, 2001, pp. 42–59, 72–78). In addition to simple jewellery and metal details of the costume, the dead were also furnished with real grave goods: coins, small tools and utensils. The latter include mostly knives and needles, but also whetstones and fire steels, in some cases also keys and remains of riding equipment were also present. In border areas the burial customs may have preserved a largely prehistoric, Late Iron Age character, including spears, axes and spurs as grave goods as late as the mid-15th century (Laul & Valk, 2007).

Grave goods known from folkloric sources and ethnographic/ethnological practices of the 19th and 20th century – coins, minor tools and utensils - greatly resemble the archaeological record of the Christian period though the assemblage is even more rich, including objects of organic material which have mostly not been preserved in the archaeological record. The folklore records mention also body care items (hair brush or later comb, handkerchief, soap, bath/sauna whisk), pipe and tobacco, and sometimes also food. As a cultural innovation, quite frequently a bottle of vodka is noted. Folkloric data also contain numerous evidence about the purpose and meanings of the grave goods (Valk, 1995a, pp. 141–149; Valk, 2001, pp. 78–81). They are mainly considered to be necessary for the dead person on the way to the world beyond or in the afterlife, but also to ensure the wellbeing of the living and to avoid any harm that might come from the dead. Expressing social status and gender or age symbolism are of greatly less importance. The similarity of medieval and post-medieval grave goods to those known from the ethnological and folkloric data from the 19th and 20th century enables us to suppose also the continuity of beliefs. Most likely, folkloric information can retrospectively shed light also upon the meanings of

grave goods and other burial practices in post-medieval and medieval times – the time gap between the abandonment of the village cemeteries and the beginning of folklore collections is limited to only four or five generations. Moreover, written data from the 17th and 18th century also gives evidence of similar beliefs as known from the oral or folkloric data of the 19th and 20th century.

The basis of Estonian traditional burial rites is the knowledge that death does not mean the end of life but it is just the transition of person and personhood into another form of existence and to other environments. The aim of the burial rites is partly to facilitate the transition of the person to the afterlife, and partly to protect the living from possible harm emerging from the loose soul or from the dead body. Many of the burial rites mean preparing the person for afterlife in the world beyond. As death may not always sever contact with the deceased the wishes of the dead person concerning the funeral must surely be followed.

7.2 Setomaa –the Case Study

An area where preconditions for preserving the old traditions have been especially favourable is the region of Setomaa on the borderlands of Estonia and Russia (Fig. 7.1) (Setomaa, 2014). This area is presently split between the two countries (since 1945), and populated partly by the indigenous Seto population, linguistically belonging to the southern Estonians, and partly by the Russians. Located immediately at the border of East and West, the small Seto community, numbering *circa* 8900 people in the mid-19th century and *circa* 13,600 in 1934[1], lived on the fringes of both the Estonian and the Russian viewpoint for centuries – side by side with the Russians but still in different villages. Being separated from the Russians by the ethno-cultural and linguistic barrier, and from the Estonians by administrative border -the area belonged, unlike the rest of southern Estonia, not to the province of Livonia, but to the province of Pskov (i.e., to Russia) – the Seto culture functioned and developed largely in isolation, preserving a most archaic character as a whole.

Setomaa has been Orthodox and involved with the Russian state since its formation. The Christianization of the Setos occurred in different stages. Although burial rites give evidence of transition to Christian practices in the 11th century (Valk, 2009, pp. 165–167), intensive missionary activities were launched only in the mid-16th century by the Pechory (Petseri) monastery, founded in 1473 (Piho, 2011, pp. 15–16). Deeper Christianization of the Setos took place, however, as late as in the 19th century. When Estonia became independent after the collapse of the Russian Czar Empire in World War I, the Seto-populated border area of the Pskov Government with adjoining Russian territories was involved in the newly-born republic in 1920.



Figure 7.1: Location of Setomaa.

In the frameworks of Orthodox popular culture, several beliefs and practices of pre-Christian origin have survived long in Setomaa. Because of their long-term persistence, the local Russians called the Orthodox Setos 'half-believers' or 'half-faithful' (*poluvercy*). Archaic traditions survived also in the field of burial customs, afterlife and the meanings attributed to the cemetery. The Seto community lived in social, economic, religious and cultural terms a most archaic life until the 1920s when rapid modernization began. Since then the quick retreat of the old traditions started, hand-in-hand with the changes of generations. In spite of that, Setomaa enables us to have an insight into concepts of death and afterlife in the era of oral culture. Although originating from a definite spatial, temporal and cultural context, traditional Seto beliefs might nevertheless reflect some ideas and principles of more general character, enabling us to understand factors which have influenced the formation of the archaeological record and its diversity. When compared to the rest of Estonia, the burial traditions of Setomaa have preserved a more archaic and conservative character. In Setomaa, archaeological

data from the village cemeteries go even up to the 1820s.

Likewise in adjacent Võrumaa district, grave goods belong also to present-day burial customs there. In addition, in the Orthodox cultural environment the ancient tradition of commemoration meals on the graves has preserved (Valk 2006). The burial rites of Setomaa (Arpo, 1996; Manninen, 1924; Richter, 1979, 1982) partly differ from those in Lutheran Estonia, having a large number of local variations. Differences may appear even between neighbouring villages.

This paper provides some reflections of my personal experiences from Setomaa, gained in communication with a person whose worldview greatly belonged to the time of her childhood – the 1910s and early 1920s. Its aim is to give an insight into some aspects of traditional Seto world view – those related to death, burial and afterlife. Unusual, strange and maybe even somewhat frightening, this knowledge might still be important for opening the meaning and backgrounds of burial rites and practices in the past. Although the examples presented below are just a cluster of diverse and occasional fragments, they hopefully give a survey of the concepts of death and afterlife in the traditional Seto mind, maybe necessary also for interpreting the archaeological record.



Figure 7.2: Mari (1912–2003) from Õrsava village in Setomaa, one of the last bearers of the tradition-based Seto popular religiosity, as it might have existed for centuries. This photo was taken on St Paraskeva's Day at the cemetery of Saatse. In ordinary time the

neck cross was not worn on the clothes – the festive situation makes an exception. Photo: Author, July, 2000.

7.3 The Person and the Meetings

The key person of this text is Maria (1912–2003), in everyday life just Mari (Fig. 7.2). She was born in small Õrsava village, 3 km from the church village of Värska, in a traditional peasant family where out of 14 children, six sisters and one brother lived to become adults. Mari lived the longest of them all. Many of Mari's beliefs, practices and knowledge came from her mother – a person of high authority both for the children and within the community. This woman, with some healing abilities, had helped in the births of more than 170 children. Having started working at a shop at Estonian army military camp in Värska, Mari got married at the age of 16 to the shop-owner, also of Seto origin. When business developed, they moved to inland Estonia in the 1930s, running a successful restaurant. The Soviet occupation put an end to their business and the family returned to the home village. In 1949, Mari's beloved husband was killed when returning from a fair at Pechory, having sold a cow there. There followed forced collectivization, loss of all her properties, unpaid work at collective farm and imprisonment, which forced the young widow with two children – two had died at a very young age – to leave for town. Time in Soviet prison gave an impetus for turning towards deep Christian religiosity, which had taken root during her childhood. Until retirement in the 1970s, Mari was a worker in the Pärnu fish industry, getting married once more. After having retired, she gradually returned to her home village, to the house bought by her sister – their own home had been lost. When the sister and her husband died, Mari inherited the place and lived there together with her son, also retired.

My meeting with her in May 1993 was fully accidental: an old woman raking the village street fascinated me with her stories about treasure-bearers and other amazing legends about the past and the supernatural. A year later, I visited her once more with some students. When the group was sitting on the grass, a small greyish blue butterfly whirled around us. Mari, noticing it, uttered as a comment: "Oh, it seems to be some soul, maybe of L. P." and continued her stories. Traditional Seto knowledge about dead persons' souls visiting their homes as insects was not a legend any more, but a part of living reality. Since then I became a frequent guest in that house, often with students. News and new visits made me a welcome guest in the small household, and gradually I became like a member of the family.

In spite of increasing physical weakness, caused by old age, Mari had a very clear mind. Her wisdom and smartness were amazing. At the same time, she belonged to the persons who had returned, when getting old,

to the spiritual realities that existed in the childhood – i.e. to the values and mentalities characteristic of the traditional Seto village of the early 20th century. During the last five to six years of her life, meeting the supernatural, and visitors from the worlds of death and afterlife, became a part of everyday reality for her; clear borders between the natural and transcendent often ceased to exist. Mari told me not only about memories from her time of youth, but opened also her own world of experiences, full of unexpected encounters with

the supernatural. Here, in this small household, things known from old folklore collections often happened to be a part of reality.

The occasional bits of information gradually formed an integral whole which can never be gained when working in archives, with folklore notes collected in different times from different people in different places. My luck was to perceive it all in real life. Meeting Mari gave me a chance to meet another era – times when the natural was directly bound with that what is regarded as "supernatural" today.

This paper, that is based on notes from my visits to Õrsava village in 1993–2003, shares a part of experience gained from Mari – that concerning the fields of death, burial, cemetery and afterlife. The aim of the text is not only to open the popular meanings and hinterlands of burial practices, important also for interpreting the archaeological record, but also to mediate the perceptions of death and afterlife, as they existed in a cultural context characteristic of the era studied by archaeology – that of traditional oral culture. The text also shows how concepts and images of death and afterlife were formed, created and reproduced in that context. Mari's world view belonged to the other side of the large watershed of modernization. The era that she mentally represents might be characterised in cultural terms as representing the *longue dureé* of the Middle Ages.

Mari's world view is not a just personal case, but a representation of an old way of world perception and mentality, fragments of which can be found in different contexts in the Seto folklore collections. It belongs into the general context of popular Orthodox religiosity, characteristic also for other Finnic territories in the realm of Orthodox culture – the Karelian, Russian and Vepsian areas (e.g. Pentikäinen, 1971; Panchenko, 1998; Jetsu 2001; Stark 2002; Järvinen, 2004; Arukask 2012). Although encountering the supernatural, including communication with the dead in dreams, is a common part of the old Seto culture, it is hard to estimate how typical or untypical were perceptions of personal contacts with the dead in the real life of the past. These spheres are too intimate to be revealed to collectors of folklore, to alien and occasional guests in the household: there are several fields that are not open for the outsiders.

Hereby I express my deep gratitude to Mari for opening her world of beliefs, most necessary for understanding the past also on much broader scale. I am grateful to Mari for openness and kind permission to use my records and notes when she is gone – for people to know how it was in the past.

7.4 Grave Goods, Clothing and Footwear

Small grave goods are known in folkloric data in burial practices in all

Estonia. In rural areas, grave goods are locally still remembered or being practised, especially in the countryside of its conservative south-eastern part and among the older generation. The body must be prepared for the afterlife, being furnished with the necessary small items, dressed according to the will of the person and having, obligatorily, footwear.

According to fieldwork of 1998–1999, in three south-easternmost districts of Estonia grave gifts were quite frequent: 39.3% of respondents mentioned some favourite things of the dead person, 33.9% named coins and 23.2% specified a bottle of vodka laid in the coffin (Torp-Kõivupuu, 2003, pp. 126–132). In general, the items used as grave goods can be classified as liked by the deceased person or as his/her personal belongings (e.g. personal knife, toys for children, pipe) or objects closely bound to personhood (e.g. glasses, walking stick, personal tools, hearing-aid, bottle of vodka, cigarettes, work-related tool, etc.). Thereby, the wishes of the dead person are clearly of primary importance at making the set or selection. Moreover 74.1% of respondents claimed that the dead person is buried in clothes prepared by him/herself. Folkloric data include also some memories of burial in wedding costume, specially kept for that purpose.

Furnishing the dead with everything necessary to them was an important issue in old Seto burial practices (Arpo, 1996, pp. 256–260). So was it also in Mari's experience. According to her, money was laid in the coffin and the deceased was furnished with an Orthodox neck cross. A housewife was provided with some wool and woollen yarn – thus it is good for her to work there – and a man was given a knife, in addition to some money. A needle was put on the breast of the women – in the middle, to the right side, hidden under the clothes so that it could not be seen – to do some work there. Money was given because it might be necessary in the afterlife when going to the shop. Mari regarded giving money not as a magic practice but just as a custom, adding the explanation: "But everyone wants money in the grave. Money is said to be necessary there." The general explanation for items laid into the coffin was that "the dead person maybe needs to take it in the other world ... We do not know, how is life in the other world. Nobody knows." When one of my close old relatives died, Mari advised me to put a 1-kroon coin into the coffin – by the right elbow and ask for luck: "Luck is luck – either big or small."

Mari repeatedly remembered the death of her mother who died in 1949 and how she had prepared everything for that. Her mother was dressed in her wedding clothes, a white long coat, headcloth and headband – all home-made. Because of having helped to give birth to many children, she was buried with white gloves woven by herself – long, elbow-length and decorated with ornaments of white yarn. Mari's father was also buried in his wedding shirt: burying in wedding clothes was believed to be good for the deceased. In practice, this could be afforded only by richer people: the poor wore out their wedding clothes during their lifetime.

Mari said that it was not allowed to have any knots in the clothes of the dead and also the woven belt could not be tied – at Resurrection the

dead must untie all the knots. Burial costume is important because the dead person will wear it in the afterlife. Mari had bought a new suit for her brother, but as he was deported to prison camp, it could not be used. When Mari's husband was killed, he was buried in the suit that was meant for her brother. Soon after her husband's burial, her brother appeared to Mari in dreams: "Dear sister, do not be displeased. I see how F. walks proudly with

my suit, but I cannot get it." Mari deeply regretted having dressed the body of her husband in her brother's suit.

Footwear is an important issue and Mari also asked to be buried in new shoes: "Then I can run and see my two husbands when they come to meet me." In the surroundings of Värska the shoes of the dead are not covered with the sheet/shroud in the coffin, but must remain uncovered. When Mari's older son was buried in the town of Pärnu, his shoes remained covered there. Soon after the funeral she dreamed of a monk, dressed in black, coming to take the son away from the grave: "Let us go now!" The son answered: "I cannot get my feet free." Anyway, Mari was glad because his stay in the grave had been so short, even if he couldn't get his feet free at once.

Mari mentioned also other beliefs and customs related to burial. Concerning grave orientation, the direction that the dead person will be facing is important: in olden times the dead were buried facing the south, but now rather facing the church. She noted that when the dead body is in the house, mirrors are covered, silence is kept and the floor is not washed because the water goes upon the dead: the loose soul of the dead is believed to be close to the floor. However, having a running stream in the village makes a difference. Households on the other side of it do not need to avoid washing the floor.

In the Seto tradition the personal items of the dead remain unused during the 40 days when the soul of the dead person has not left yet. When Mari's older son died, his widow offered his clothes to Mari's other son, but Mari refused to take anything before that deadline.

7.5 The Cemetery and Meals on the Graves

In Seto tradition, the cemetery is a sacred area. The grave is not only the place for commemoration and mourning, but is primarily perceived as the location or dwelling-site of the departed. The cemetery is also an area for communication with those who have passed to the world beyond (Valk, 2006, pp. 143–144), especially during church holidays when the borders between the visible and invisible become more vague and open than usual: the intersection of sacred time and sacred space makes it possible for a while. The sacredness of the burial ground is reflected also in Estonian folkloric data about the village cemeteries, deserted in the first half of the 18th century (Valk, 1995b, pp. 505–506).

In the burial rites of south-eastern Estonia, food is of great importance (Torp-Kõivupuu, 2003, pp. 66–90). In earlier times, slaughtering an animal, or at least a chicken was obligatory for funerals. In Setomaa the archaic practice of having meals on the graves continues to the present day (Valk, 2001, pp. 81–83; Valk, 2006, pp. 141–144).

Unlike the Catholic and Lutheran confessions, the Orthodox Church has been tolerant towards it. Food is served during the funeral on the freshly-closed grave and later at home, on personal commemoration days, including the commemoration

of 40 days[2] (Fig. 7.3) and one year after the death, as well as on big church holidays. In earlier times, this practice was followed also on ordinary holidays and Sundays, after the sermon. When coming and leaving, some alcohol must be poured to the cross and, according to the tradition, some food was left on the grave or buried in the sand. Ritual consumption of food and alcohol is a means to facilitate communication – both among the living and between the living and the departed.



Figure 7.3: Mari's grave, Värska Cemetery on the commemoration day of 40 days after the death when the soul is seen off. In addition to sandwiches, cakes, sweets and cookiesthe traditional ritual burial food kutja, made of peas and honey, is on the table in an open jar. Photo: Author, June, 2003.

In Lutheran Estonia only faint traces of the custom can be observed in folkloric collections and popular practices – they are preserved best in Võrumaa where food and drinks are still given to people after the funerals, outside the graveyard gates. However, materials of the Provincial Council of medieval Livonia[3] from 1428 show that meals on the graves and even in consecrated churchyards was a serious problem of general character for the Catholic Church in medieval times (LUB VII, 690, p. 19).

The traditional belief that the location of the dead in afterlife is bound with the grave appeared also in my communication with Mari. Visiting the graves on holidays was most important to her. Mari taught me that alcohol must be poured on the grave first, before drinking yourself – not upon the cross but at its foot. However, thereby you must take the first drop and only then pour the drink – otherwise the dead cannot get it. She also told me that leaving pieces of cake on the grave stone is not correct: the soul comes to look for food on the ground surface. Once she expressed the wish of the dead: something, a piece of bread if nothing else, must always be left on the grave – then "we can take it from there."

Bringing food to the grave is not only a symbolic act. The custom must be observed, otherwise unwanted events may follow. In 1997 Mari said that for the Day of Transformation (August 19) she had promised to take a cock to her husband's grave: "I shall kill it and make a soup. We shall eat the soup ourselves, and the meat will be taken to the church, to the grave." Being sorry for the bird, she, however, did not fulfil the promise. When seeing a hawk making circles above her house some days later she was worried about the chicken: "The hawk knows that the cock was promised to F. Now he will come and take it."

On the Day of Annunciation, March 25, according to old tradition, people gathered on the graves, put candles there, ate pike, and some vodka was poured for the dead. However, Mari's son who was sent to the cemetery of Värska (Fig. 7.4) did not visit all the graves in 1998. The next day a fox came and took some chickens. As there had been no bad luck with fowls in the household before, the reason was clear. In addition, Mari later informed me how her sister with her husband, both deceased, appeared. The sister told it was her husband who took the hen and the cock – because no candle was put on their grave and no drink was poured there. And also during the Easter of 2001 when no egg was brought to Mari's parents' grave, and two pinkish red Easter eggs got broken at home, the reason for that was evident: "Yes, they took their share."



Figure 7.4: The cemetery of Värska. Estonian and Seto cemeteries are always covered with trees and have a forest-like atmosphere. In the old Seto tradition a tree growing on or at the grave was also the personification of the deceased buried there. Later this meaning was transferred to the grave cross that was touched with the hand when arriving and leaving. Timber crosses stand on the graves until they rot, and are not replaced. From graves designated with only a gravestone the crosses have disappeared already. Photo: Author, 2010.

The grave is also the area where things can be delivered to the dead. If something that should have been laid in the coffin has been forgotten, it can be added later, burying it in the grave. This belief and practise is known also in Võrumaa. In 2001 Mari discovered that the skirt of a recently dead relative which had remained in her household had got worms in it. She asked for it to be burned or taken to the cemetery. Since the person was buried in Tartu, at the grave of her father, and as the relatives probably would not have liked it, the first option was chosen. Mari also reminded me of a case when a nice shop candle was brought to the grave, but the dead person appeared in a dream and told that there was no use for it: the dead need candles from the church.

7.6 Meeting the Departed

In the traditional Seto world view the dead continue their existence in an afterlife, separate from the world of the living. Information from there can occasionally appear in different ways, on different levels and through different channels. Messages from the dead and about their life 'over there' come, as we have already seen in case of Mari, most often via dreams.

In addition, in Mari's life another unexpected way of communication was opened: the dead started visiting her at home. During the last six years of her life, she repeatedly told about such meetings in her house (Fig. 7.5) and in her room, fully contradicting the materialistic concepts of reality. Meeting her dead relatives – sisters with their husbands, parents and brother began in 1997, when Mari was 87. The experience was first somewhat frightening: "You see, the dead come welcoming me behind the window. Shall I die soon?"



Figure 7.5: Mari's house in Õrsava village in Setomaa – a place where the supernatural could often be experienced. Since the death of Mari and her son the house has been empty for over six years. Photo: Author, June, 2014.

However, the dead became quite frequent and lately even eagerly expected guests in Mari's life. They appeared unexpectedly, mostly in the clothes in which they had been buried, as old as at the age of death and with their faces unchanged. Once Mari had suggested her sister might stay the night, but she answered that the dead cannot sleep there but must get back to the cemetery. Mari's response to my asking how often the dead can visit the world of the living was: "Only when they are allowed. It is not so that they go whenever and wherever they want. They can leave [their place] for as much as they have earned. If they pray and behave well, they are released. They have order there. It is not so that they go when they want." Talks during these visits greatly influenced and formed Mari's concept and knowledge of the life beyond.

A case when all the sisters with their husbands had visited her included a common meal in the small room. The dead appeared at once, as if from under the floor: "We came to see what are you doing here alone". One of the sisters asked: "Dear sister, please, pour for us, we cannot do it ourselves!" When they gave back the tiny glass cup, it was empty. The dead had their own food with them – somewhat similar to church bread given to people at Orthodox sermons. When Mari tasted it, a sister asked her not to bite this much: "This is our food share for the whole month. We are only licking – we cannot bite". In response to my question about bodily communication, Mari told me that once she gave her hand to her brother. It felt somewhat like a hand but then her eyes opened and her hand was empty.

The brother who had died in Soviet prison camp in Vorkuta came once in the daytime, being as young as when deported in the late 1940s. He said he was sentenced to prison for his lifetime, but now when the time meant for living was over, he could leave the place. He wondered that nothing had remained from their home in Õrsava village and complained about having no grave. When Mari replied that there was a grave for him in the churchyard – with a cross and text on the gravestone (Fig. 7.6), the brother disappeared – "probably to the cemetery"– and did not return any more.

The souls of the dead often appeared also as another form of being. A big butterfly at the window was supposed to be the soul of the deceased son and no moth was killed in the house because "it may be some soul." After the death of the older son – this hard and most painful blow happened in 1998 – Mari even did not kill flies: "maybe his soul is among them?" Strange flies which had lived in the room for the whole winter of 2001/2002 were also considered to be spirits: "I have counted, they are as many as we have dead [people] here. The masters have come home!" Meeting the souls incarnated as insects (Loorits, 1949, pp. 292–293) is common in Seto tradition, but souls may also appear in the shape

of birds.



Figure 7.6: The grave of Mari's grandfather and parents. The black gravestone with the thin cross behind it is a cenotaph for Mari's brother who died in a Soviet prison camp in Vorkuta. Photo: Author, 2000.

7.7 The World Beyond

Popular images of afterlife correspond to the dualistic concept of 'good place' and 'evil place' characteristic of the old Seto culture. Mari's knowledge of the world beyond was based firstly on dreams, then on communication with the visiting dead and, finally, on personal experiences. In late 2001 she first told me about visiting Heavens. Two sisters came suddenly when she was sitting on the bed, took her by the elbows and then they went. There were many people in the State of Heavens (*taevariik*), all relatives. "I cannot tell you how is it there. All is different there... I would never have imagined that I can see Heaven in my bodily shape." Heaven was a most important topic during the last year of life: "I see it very often, nothing else than it." Her reply to my question, if she had seen Heaven in reality or in a dream, was: "I do not know. And what is the difference?" Mari described the Paradise as a definite place in the Heavens – like a summer house with a nice garden where people go for vacation.

The key topic in terms of afterlife was news about the two closest people – her beloved first husband, and the older son who died in 1998. There was no information about the husband for a long time – those who die a violent death are separated from others, in another place, and

cannot meet. Only meeting the dead relatives revealed that her husband was a superior person in Heaven and had two servants who made food for him – daughters of Mari's sisters. Old people had told her already

that those who have been killed become superior. The dead sisters informed Mari that he lives well, although he has become older – living as if he were in a trough and waiting for her. In another dream Mari asked if she can meet her husband. The answer was that is up to him to decide – if he wants, they can meet. When being called, you must go at once: "If my son calls me, I must go to live with him, but if my husband – then to him." Messages from the life beyond convinced Mari that her dead son continued his work there – an assistant of Christ at judgement over the souls. He was assisted by two brothers who had died very young, and had grown only a little older.

From one of the dead sisters Mari heard also about other relatives: she had met some of them but some were in another place. There were only people from the surrounding villages in Heaven, and no unknown people. Only one person, suspected to be involved in killing Mari's husband, was missing: he is not in Heaven.

In popular perception the world beyond is not a real paradise. Life in Heaven may resemble ordinary life, also in practical terms. A dead sister told Mari that her [Mari's] son lived together with his father, in room No. 6, but she herself was in the adjacent room – No. 7. The husband had asked Mari not to be buried in white clothes – they would get dirty. This made her worried: all the dead whom she had seen in Heaven were dressed in white, or at least, in light-coloured dress. Mari told me that if clothes get worn, new ones will be given – you are not kept there without clothing.

In Seto popular images, the afterlife is not a place of active communication and the dead are somehow separated from each other: this appears clearly in dreams about the afterlife, including in the case of Mari. Men and women cannot meet there: although they are first together, they are later separated. When one of her sisters was killed by lightening, their dead father appeared to Mari in a dream in some festive hall, telling her that her sister had also come there. In response to her question about the sister, Mari saw her in the hall, somehow alone. And "that one, who leads the party, who shows the seats" went first and showed the sister a place to sit. Father told Mari: "we see all who come here but we cannot meet. Who comes, sits on the bench and we cannot meet." The next day the telegram with the news of her sister's death arrived.

In another dream Mari visited one of her sisters in Heaven. The sister lived in a hall, like an old log house, with a door covered with a curtain. Three other people, all likewise ill, lay in one bed and the sister was opposite to them in the room. A woman, St Mary (*P*ü*ha Maarja*) stood at the door and did not want to let Mari in, but she still managed. When Mari lay on her sister's bed, they could talk but after the conversation the sister urged her to leave quickly: "if you stay until counting begins,

the doors will be closed and you must stay here inside!" When leaving, St Mary was standing on the door, blocking her way out. After some struggle she managed to escape, but the shawl of a living sister, which Mari happened to have with her, fell down and remained in the house. Soon the news of that sister's death arrived.

7.8 Factors Forming the Afterlife

In Seto beliefs the location and status of the dead in the world beyond depend on several factors – the age, time and manner of death, but also the way of earthly life: it is determined or sentenced for everybody "as you have earned". All this was communicated by Mari. She was somewhat worried about her future: those who get to Heaven while young have a good life there, but the life of the old will be miserable. It is good to die between Easter and Whitsun, when the gates of the Heavens are open and the souls can enter directly, but those dying after Whitsun must wait until the next Easter.

As mentined above, people who die a violent death, likewise those killed in a battle, are separated from others. In addition to her husband, this fate was shared by the daughter of Mari's sister, who had also been murdered. Mari told me she had a good job in Heaven, working as a cook and making food for others. In her free time she lived in a rose garden, among flowers, quite alone, and most satisfied with her life. The soul of the hanged or drowned must, however, stay in the place of death until the next person dies the same death there: only then it can leave: "If someone is drowned, he cannot escape the water spirits, until there is another in his place." In 1994 a man drowned in Lake Õrsava, after a long time. Mari said that the old people had discussed already why Nikolai who drowned there previously, in the 1950s, must have been in the water for so long[4].

Also all those who die without the presence of others are at first separated from others and only when their time is over, are they allowed to enter the Paradise garden – a beautiful place with flowers. When visiting her dead sister in Heaven in a dream, Mari had seen a crowd of young boys running in the corridor. These were the souls of those who had died alone, just released from the status of being separated. The wall opened and they could enter.

Afterlife may also be a punishment: the husband of one of the sisters was not allowed to meet others because he had killed three people in the war. The world beyond is hard for those who die of alcohol: they have no place in Heaven. Mari told me also about a new group who had visited her in her room – small children, homeless and who had frozen to death in the street. Small, miserable and some having the marks of freezing on the body, they wanted sweets and Mari was very sorry that she had none at home.

One of Mari's sisters who lived in Heaven in a room under the stairs had a hard time: she was permanently hungry and had only rye grains to eat. Mari told her that she commemorates her in the church (Fig. 7.7) and takes her everything but the sister answered that she gets none of it: the dead can eat only what they have given to others during their lifetime. She had been a stingy person.



Figure 7.7: The Orthodox Church in Värska, built in 1904–1907, replacing the old timber church. The graveyard was established here only together with the new church. Earlier the dead were buried in the local village cemetery of medieval origin. Photo: Author, 2010.

7.9 Discussion and Conclusions

Beliefs are bound both with the individual and the society, being composed of several factors. The cultural traditions of the region or community form the background and backbone of individual world views. The second, family level provides the individual with information coming from the circle of closest relatives. Thirdly, personal experiences also contribute to the formation of personal beliefs and world views. All these factors had their role also in the formation of Mari's images of the world beyond.

The world has changed fast and it seems to be impossible any more to find people who live, on the basis of continuity, in the world of tradition-

based oral culture in

present-day Estonia. I am happy to have met Mari in Õrsava village and for the chance to encounter the living past. Although the contents of this chapter are based on communication with one person in one specific village, they surely have much broader backgrounds, representing concepts of death and afterlife characteristic of the old oral, pre-modern Seto culture (see: Valk & Västrik, 1996, pp. 217–267). Fragments of similar perceptions can often be found in folklore collections as well as when talking to old people in any part of Setomaa.

As we saw above, many impulses for the formation of beliefs and ideas about death and afterlife may originate from dreams of the mourners and relatives, appearing either occasionally or after death and funerals. Although appearing at the personal level, this kind of information about the departed, as extraordinary and important, quickly spreads among the family, relatives and local community. Moreover, the border between natural and supernatural can be vague in traditional world perception. It often remains unclear whether connections between events are just a coincidence or something else – bound by intangible ties. In any case, the personal experiences of the 'supernatural' – either coming from dreams or real life – are most important factors to confirm, re-produce and develop beliefs provided by formerly existing cultural tradition.

The examples presented above also give some idea about the complexity of the perceptions of death and afterlife in a tradition-based society. Mari's beliefs represent a world view with concepts of death and afterlife totally different from ours. Death means transition, and the living can help somewhat to shape the fate of the deceased through burial rites and commemoration. The worlds of the dead and of the living are not fully separate and meetings are possible – through dreams and visions, and through communication in the sacred space of the cemetery, especially in the sacred time of holidays.

These fragments concerning afterlife in the Seto tradition enable us to suggest it to be rather similar to life on the earth. The dead need personal items, money and clothes, they work and may suffer hunger. Clothes get worn and dirty. The fact that the dead appear in dreams in the costume in which they were buried gives evidence of the meaning of burial costume. As in this world, the dead form a community based on kinship and neighbourhood, but people get older more slowly than in ordinary life. Although the image of afterlife is influenced by the Christian concept of Heaven. The State of Heaven is not a paradise, but a locus with problems and also with social inequalities. Christian ideas are mostly expressed in the images of afterlife only indirectly, on a meta level – in the perception that the dead are subordinated to anonymous powers, that they are no longer independent actors, and that there is Judgement by Christ on the other side. It is noteworthy that similar

conclusions can be drawn also on the basis of the character of the archaeological record from the 13th – 17th centuries (Valk, 1995a, p. 150). However, only a small part of the diversity of beliefs can be reflected in the archaeological record: most of it exists and is preserved in the living mind and oral tradition. All in all, the Seto experience shows

that in the popular form of Christianity concepts of death and afterlife can be diverse and manifold. Being a true Christian does not mean that there exists no place for traditional concepts of death and the afterlife of pre-Christian origin.

The system of beliefs is permanently being reproduced and transferred from one generation to another. A precondition for the persistence of the concepts of afterlife is the stability of culture and society. This was the case also with the Seto society until the rapid changes which started in the 1920s and continued with the destruction of the tradition-based society in the Soviet period. As we saw above, also Mari's concepts of afterlife were multi-layered. Bound with real life, they reflected its changes and contained elements from different temporal strata. Thus, counting the souls might be a reflection of memories of the Estonian army Värska military camp (1926–1940); the idea of the souls of dead women being separated from those of men might recall the deportations (1941, 1949) when men were separated from their families; the idea that the dead live in numbered rooms recalls the realities of Soviet times, e.g. hospitals or prison. In some way, the spirit of experienced authoritarian state order could be felt in the images of afterlife.

However, in an unexplained way elements from much earlier times, unavailable for personal memory, could also appear in the perceptions of afterlife. In Mari's case, the image of the dead husband living "as if in a trough" is evidently the reflection of burial in dug-out coffins – a tradition belonging to the old burial practices of the Setos and also other eastern Finno-Ugric peoples (Richter, 1982, p. 98). In spite of Mari's vision, dug-out coffins were not used within her lifetime and she did not remember burying in them. In a similar way, folklore texts about the spirits of the dead appearing in white clothes on old cemetery sites reflect the former practice of burial in white linen clothes – a practice that can be observed in the late medieval and post-medieval archaeological record of southern Estonia.

A look into the tradition-based Seto perception of death and afterlife shows that archaeology, when being limited with tools of the profession, can grasp only a few aspects of former beliefs, just the small tip of the iceberg. Burial archaeology can never catch the full set of ideas bound to the funeral rites and practices. However, it is exactly these beliefs in their whole complexity that have been the background and context for the formation of the archaeological record. Ethnographic and folkloric evidence makes us also bear in mind that the personal factor, including the dreams and supernatural experiences, both of the dead person and of the survivors, should not be underestimated at the formation of the burial record. Maybe just here might be one of the main reasons for its variability.

Archaeology and ethnology have traditionally been regarded as different disciplines, located apart from each other, with different research objects, methods and periods (e.g. Gazin-Schwartz & Holtorf, 1999, pp. 6–11; Burström, 1999). However, the lack or scantiness of meeting points may be not so much caused by a real separation, but by research traditions. In reality, the connections may be closer than

suggested, and the archaeological record, giving evidence only of some aspects of the former realities, may be greatly complemented by oral evidence. Oral data may also raise questions about the validity of the existing archaeological interpretations. For example, although the medieval archaeological record from Scandinavian cemeteries since Christianization seems to be clearly of Christian character (e.g. Kieffer-Olsen, 1993), and can be interpreted as a sign of a deeply Christian society, ethnographic data give evidence of numerous popular practices not belonging to the Christian context (Hagberg, 1937). Unfortunately, the possibilities of using folkloric and ethnographic data have largely remained underestimated by archaeologists.

In conclusion, to get a full and adequate basis for archaeological interpretations of historical burial practices in medieval and especially post-medieval Europe, oral, ethnographic and folkloric evidence from the same cultural context should be taken into consideration, where possible and relevant. The smaller the time gap, the more likely is the continuity of tradition and the relevance of the folkloric record. To understand the essence of things, a problem-based approach of multi- or trans-disciplinary character might be even more fertile than studies of single aspects of the topic, limited with data possessed by just one speciality.

Cases when the archaeological record has available parallels in ethnological practices and folkloric collections can greatly deepen our understanding of the past. In Estonia, and especially Setomaa, beliefs of a most traditional character have survived up to the 20th century, and the archaeological record from the 13th century until the early 19th century has direct parallels with evidence from folkloric data and within existing practices. Here there is a good chance to look for meanings of the post-medieval and medieval archaeological record more deeply and from other aspects than those enabled by archaeology only. The folkloric data gives archaeology the possibility of seeing the meanings of customs and the multi-dimensionality of beliefs related to death, burials, cemeteries and the afterlife in the context of tradition-based oral culture. In my personal experience, much understanding has been provided by directly encountering some last fragments of the living traditional world view, greatly mediated by Mari.

7.10 Epilogue: The Departure

Mari died on May 23, 2003, between Easter and Whitsun, at the age of 91. She was buried in Värska cemetery, according to her will, on the left hand of her first husband – “because woman is made of the left hipbone of man.” The morning after her death a cuckoo was calling for a long

time on top of the high birch on the border of the household. In local Seto tradition, a cuckcoo coming close to the house is a sign or omen of death. It was sitting on the very top of the tree, on the highest branches which did not bend at all under the weight of the big bird. There had never been a cuckoo so close to Mari's house during my experience.

Mari was buried with a needle with red yarn, as she had asked, close to her head under the pillow[5], and a coin by her right elbow. Her headscarf was not knotted under the chin. A diagonal cross of red yarn was made under her head – an ancient practice she considered important but the reasons and meanings of which were unknown to her, as they were to anybody else in the present time (see also Richter, 1998, pp. 96–98). As Mari's comb could not be found, her cousin, aged over 80, gave hers, saying that it must be put into the coffin. During Mari's last stay at home, there was a bottle of vodka with a snifter (a glass) and an open box of chocolates at the coffin. And during the 40 days after her departure there stood a bench, covered with white cloth and with a candle on it, in front of the Holy corner with icons – for the soul to rest.

Mari persuaded me not to kill a chicken for her funeral: "Do what you want with the hen, but I do not want that any chicken should lose its life because of me." However, when returning from the commemoration marking six months since her death, the car accidentally struck a roe deer on the road. The hunters came in response to a phone call and cut the throat of the mortally-wounded animal. Slaughtering an animal for funerals – a blood sacrifice for the dead – was an obligatory part of traditional Seto burial rites.

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1 The present-day population in the Estonian part of Setomaa is ca. 3100 people (excluding the large diaspora, partly mixed with the Estonians; according to the census of 2011 ca. 12,549 people determined themselves as knowing the Seto language) and to this number some 300 people in its Russian part can be added.

2 According to the Orthodox tradition the soul of the dead person is believed to stay in this world for forty days. Then, as the Seto say, it is 'set to its place'.

3 The Provincial Council was the highest ecclesiastical institution of collective character in medieval Livonia.

4 A similar explanation came to my question concerning the ferry Estonia which sunk on the Baltic Sea on September 28 1994, with 852 people drowned: "You see, many ships have sunk. This ship is not the first. But they went to save others. Those, who had drowned before, had their time full. And after that – again – how long time is written for them? Yes, those can, if someone drowns again, can go away – to the Heaven or where the souls go." My question if those who sunk together with the ferry went to release all the souls in Baltic Sea – got no definite answer: "I do not know. It is up to the water spirits."

5 Respecting Mari's wish, we still did it – in spite of the neighbour's words who asked not to give the needle. She told that after adding it into the coffin of her mother, she had appeared in a dream and told likewise being surrounded by needles. I did not follow the advice of another person in the village. He told me that immediately after carrying the coffin out of the house, a nail or any other sharp item, e.g. a thumbtack must be kicked or pressed in the floor in the place where the coffin had stood – otherwise the dead will begin visiting the home as a revenant.

Hauke Kenzler

8 Religion, Status and Taboo. Changing Funeral Rites in Catholic and Protestant Germany

Introduction

In dealing with their deceased, human societies normally behave very conservatively. Often hardly any changes are detectable over centuries or even millennia. In contrast, there is a marked transition in funerary customs in central Europe at the transition from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern period. This was a very eventful time at several levels. Great geographic discoveries and technical innovations were made; but social changes also occurred which led to rapid and significant modifications in burial customs. The main focus of this paper lies on the different beliefs in Catholic and Protestant Germany and their manifestation in archaeologically examined graves. Graves were used as means of symbolic communication between this world and the hereafter. Changes in burial custom therefore always express changes in living culture as well.

High and late-medieval cemeteries and in particular those from the modern period have received intensified attention from archaeologists in Germany in the last 20 years (see summaries in Kenzler, 2011; Thier, 1999; Wittkopp, 1997). Medieval burials had been reckoned to be archaeologically less attractive before then, apart from early-medieval graves, which usually contained grave goods. Post-medieval burials were considered as disturbances of archaeological features, due to their young age. But by now there are about 100 burial places of the time in question for which excavation results have been published in Germany. A larger number are still waiting for scientific processing. The many excavations of crypts, which are often carried out by building or art historians, are not even included in that number (e.g. Fingerlin, 1992; Ströbl & Vick, 2007). Unfortunately, publications are very diverse in quality, and beside some excellent site reports often only a few graves were documented. Nevertheless, the rapidly increasing number of excavations of medieval and post-medieval burial places brought many new facets to light, which can now be compared over larger regions and across different denominations.

To approach the differences between High Medieval (ca. 1050-1250), Late Medieval (ca. 1250-1500), post-medieval: Catholic and Protestant

(since 1517) burial customs and thus ultimately the effects of the Reformation, different aspects have to be compared. For this purpose, the focus of this chapter will go from a broad to a narrow scale. To begin with, the burial place as a whole will be considered, then the individual grave and its furnishings. Hasty burials near places of execution and on battlefields or other special varieties will remain unconsidered (e.g. Auler, 2004; Lütgert, 2002;

Maier, 1988). On a cautionary note, archaeology can only detect specific aspects of the funeral ritual. Nothing can be said about the granting of the last sacraments in Catholic belief or about the celebration of the Last Supper by Protestants. The announcement of death, bell-ringing, the wake, funeral procession and ecclesiastical funeral service are in effect withdrawn from view. On the other hand, to a large extent written sources remain silent on the archaeological results. Not everything was written down and not all commandments were obeyed. Only in the synthesis of different kinds of sources can a more or less complete picture be obtained.

8.1 The Cemetery and its Organisation

The religious changes that came about with the Reformation demanded modifications in the location of the burial places and the position of the individual graves. How these modifications were enforced and how they also affected Catholic burial places, is briefly presented here.

8.1.1 Medieval Cemeteries

In the Christian Middle Ages burials were usually placed around the church and therefore within the cities or villages. It was of great importance to be buried *ad sanctos*. In the medieval churchyard the dead profited from the beneficial effects of the relics of the saints and the divine service nearby. The purview of the relics, calculated for actual distances by various synods, determined the size of the consecrated churchyards1. Therefore they described, in an idealized way, a circle around the church, which could not be expanded at need (Sörries, 2002, p. 90). Fundamental was the idea of Purgatory as a place for the cleansing of the soul. This idea was outlined conceptually by theologians in the 12th century but was already centuries older. Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) had already mentioned exemplary rescues through posthumous intercessions and masses (Kuhl, 2005 pp. 56ff.).

During excavations frequent overlaps of graves became visible within the enclosed churchyards. These show the limited space for burials as well as the minor importance of occupying an individual grave *in aeternum*. It was only important to stay within the churchyard, which was included in the celebrations of the divine service. By no means must the anonymity of the graves be evaluated as impiety. Even in death the individual was part of the community and expected his or her resurrection on

Judgement Day. The alliance extended up to the living, who used the churchyard not only for ecclesiastical actions, but also for mundane purposes such as a meeting and market place, theatre, meadow for livestock, orchard or hay-field (e.g. Illi, 1992, pp. 37ff.).

An inner order, apart from the general orientation of all burials to the east, is only seldom recognizable in high and late medieval cemeteries. The only cemetery that has so far been completely excavated and published is the one around the parish church of Breunsdorf near Leipzig. Here the density of graves increased towards the church and therefore towards the saints. Children who presumably died unbaptised or were born dead were frequently buried along the eaves and behind the choir, where they could be continuously blessed by the eavesdrip (Kenzler, 2002, p. 150). However, this custom seems to be more typical for post-medieval times (cf. Ulrich-Bochsler, 1990).

The church of the Middle Ages itself can be understood as a roofed cemetery. Although councils and synods from the sixth century onwards often repeated the prohibition of burials inside churches, these restrictions did not resist the pressure of everyday life. Most important was the council of Mainz in 813 which committed: *Nullus mortuus infra ecclesiam sepeliatur, nisi episcopi aut abbates aut digni presbiteri, vel fideles laici*[2]. So only bishops, abbots, worthy priest and faithful laymen had a fundamental claim to a burial inside the church. Consequently such a burial was for the elites only and meant high prestige. The wish for a burial inside a church has its origin in the proximity to the saint. The church became the most sought-after burial place. Here, a clear hierarchy in the placement of graves is visible. During the High and Late Middle Ages the most popular places were in front of the altars (cf. Scholkmann, 2003, pp. 212ff., figs. 11 and 12).

To handle the overcrowding of the churchyards, which was increasingly regarded as injurious to health, without removing the dead from the purview of the saints' relics, ossuaries were erected. The bones that were found when new graves were dug, in particular the long bones, the pelvises and the skulls were carried to these houses. The ossuary, which had in any case to be situated within the enclosed churchyard, served as the place for a secondary burial. The first evidence for ossuaries in the written sources are from the 12th century, when the population in Germany increased massively. With the synods of Münster and Cologne in the years 1279 and 1280, the erection of charnel-houses became obligatory (Wolf, 1980, p. 157). The anonymous burial in a charnel-house was thus by no means a socially low burial form. In some cemeteries it finally became a rule that all mortal remains were to be taken to the ossuary, and in an increasingly shorter time after inhumation. Furthermore the public presentation of the bones of the dead served also as a *memento mori*.

8.1.2 Post-medieval Cemeteries

The Reformation with its refusal of posthumous intercession cleared the way for a separation of church and burial place. Luther wrote in 1527:

> *Denn ein begrebnis solt ja bilich ein feiner stiller ort sein, der abgesondert were von allen oertern, darauff man mit andacht gehen und stehen kuendte, den tod, das Juengst gericht und aufferstehung zu betrachten und zu beten*. (Luther, 1901, p. 375)

The reformer therefore wanted the cemetery as a place of rest and peace for the dead and as a place of reflection for the living. In fact many cemeteries were transferred outside of towns in Protestant areas in the 16th century, also much motivated by the already stated problems of overcrowding. The closing of monastic burial places in the Protestant towns intensified the situation. So traditional burial in the churchyard ended and was replaced by the establishment of cemeteries outside towns (e.g. Illi, 1992, pp. 126ff.). An example from Leipzig shows that despite the resistance of orthodox elites, the relocation of the burial place could be achieved mainly through health-related and political arguments. Reformed councillors initiated and supported the relocation in spite of the objections of the clergy. Georg of Sachsen was persuaded by hygienic reasons and as Duke of Saxony in 1536 he forbade all burials inside Leipzig. The Lutheran town council thus used the widespread anti-clerical atmosphere and the fear of epidemics as tools for the realization of its reformatory aims (Koslofsky, 1995). Finally, with some delay, Catholic towns also followed the Protestant example. In rural settlements with their smaller populations both denominations retained burials around the parish church within the settlement, often to the present day.

In the new cemeteries the dead were buried in orderly rows and provided with a gravestone, sometimes from the beginning, as for example in Nuremberg, where burials inside the town were already prohibited before the introduction of the Reformation in the year 1520 (Pilz, 1984). The grave markers tell of an individualization of the death and a more individual mourning that will be dealt with more fully below. The majority of the new cemeteries of the 16th century, just like the medieval churchyards, lacked any inner order. The graves were scattered and the entire place looked neglected (cf. Fischer, 2001, pp. 20, 31; Sörries, 2002, p. 90). In the cemetery of the rural settlement Breunsdorf, no change could be observed archaeologically for a long time after the introduction of the Reformation. After the new belief had

been introduced here in 1542, the order of the graves did not change until the late 17th century. The excavation plan shows from the start of the 17th century a clear movement away from the church wall and a striking re-ordering (Fig. 8.1). An extraordinarily large number of children's graves were discovered in the southeast of the cemetery, but they were also found in other parts of the burial area, where they were presumably buried near their families (Kenzler, 2009: 145, fig. 4).

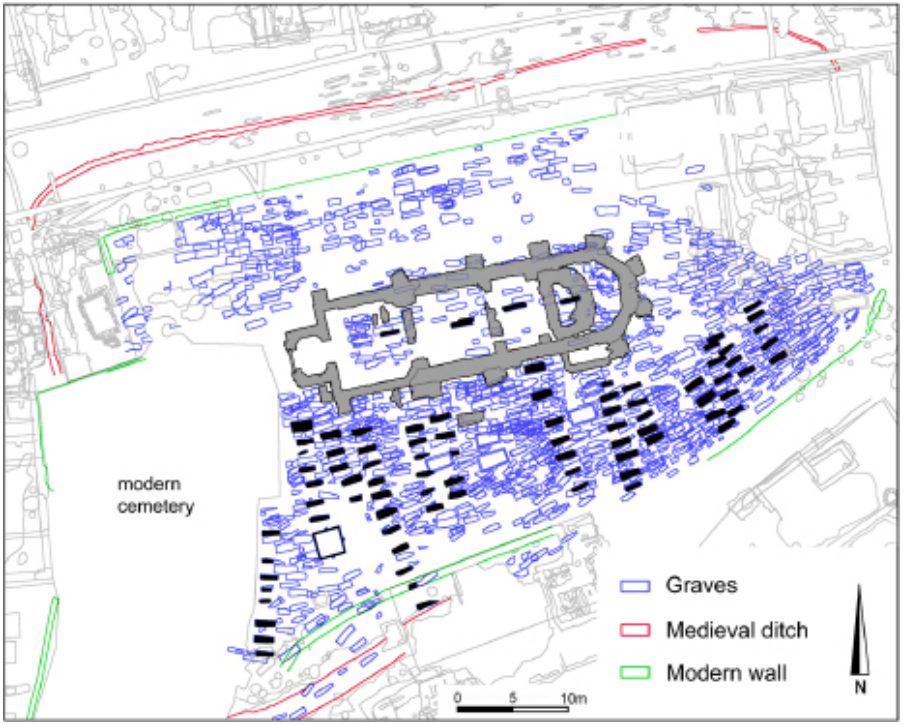


Figure 8.1: The cemetery of Breunsdorf near Leipzig.

Through the creation of new, more spacious cemeteries many ossuaries became redundant. The existing houses were supposed to disappear, since they were reminders of the old times and an ossuary-cult was practiced around them (cf. Illi, 1992: 131ff.; Sörries, 2002, pp. 255, 392). The display of mortal remains was also seen as against the required peace of the dead. Their removal, however, was not always easy. Thus the inhabitants of Vilshofen on the Danube refused to clear their ossuary in 1592 in spite of the prospect of a good payment. In the end it was simply bricked up (Werner & Werner, 1988, p. 252). The charnel-house in Breunsdorf existed until the 17th or 18th century, when the dead were re-buried in a shared pit in the cemetery (Kenzler, 2002, p. 153, fig. 3). In Catholic areas the ossuaries remained in function until the creation of new, larger burial places. However, they also fell out of fashion when individualised burials were increasingly requested. In order to preserve the bones in the charnel-houses from the anonymous mass, the skulls were sometimes painted with names and life dates from the end of the 18th century (Werner & Werner, 1988, p. 260) (Fig. 8.2).



Figure 8.2: The charnel-houses of Hallstatt in Austria.

After the relics had lost their importance through the Reformation and authorities sought to separate churches and burial grounds, it is surprising that burials inside churches continued in Protestant times. Examples of Early Modern graves which were excavated in churches are numerous. Often burials inside churches still continued into the 18th century; the Reformation led to no prohibition. Only due to hygienic necessities and under the impact of buckling church floors or collapsing crypts were church burials stopped in the Modern Age (cf. Heubeck, 2009, p. 93ff; Kenzler, 2002, p. 154). It seems clear that this burial tradition continued because of status and prestige. The reformers could not act against the will of rich and influential families. Martin Luther himself was buried in the Castle Church of Wittenberg by order of Elector Johann Friedrich in 1546.

Differences between Catholic and Protestant church burials do not exist, whether in the groups of persons who were buried there, or in the shape of the graves. Often both denominations used expensive crypts or chamber tombs. However, differences do occur in the exact location inside the church. So a tomb with stairs descending under the main altar of the St. Johannes Church in the town of Crailsheim could have been constructed because the altar – now a communion table - had lost its meaning as a sepulcrum for relics (Fehring & Stachel, 1967, p. 30). The use of the entire church as a burial place, sometimes with an accentuation of the middle axis, is also striking. In Breunsdorf 12 burials

in total, dating from the end of the 17th and throughout the

18th century, were found within the church. As is common Protestant practice, they are clearly oriented on the central axis and aligned on the communion table or the baptismal font (Kenzler, 2009, p. 148, fig. 4).

In Catholic areas archaeological investigations record a striking modification from the beginning of the 17th century onwards in the case of priest burials. These were now often laid out with the head towards the altar, so they could be oriented from north to south or lie with their head in the east (Fig. 8.3). A written instruction that priests should be buried in this way is mentioned for the first time in the *Rituale Romanum* of Pope Paul V in 1614. The rite emphasized the special role of the priest and is one of several changes that were introduced in the course of the Counter Reformation, during which one sought to stress one's belief particularly (Mittelstraß, 2007, p. 23f.).

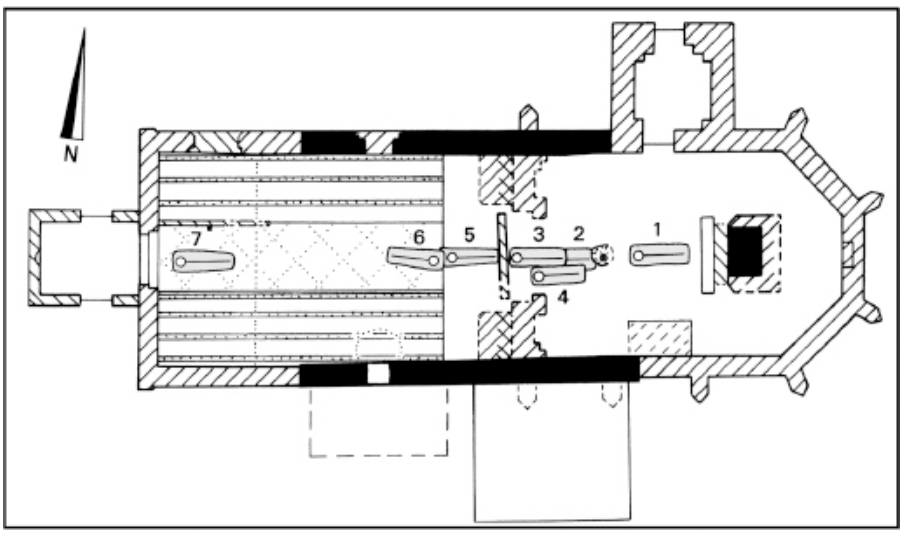


Figure 8.3: The parish church St. Bartholomäus in Markt Indersdorf with burials from the late 17th and the early 18th century. Grave 6 belongs to a priest (after Mittelstraß, 2007, Abb. 4).

8.2 The Individual Grave in the Burial Place

There is no fundamental difference between the denominations as far as the shape and the marking of the graves is concerned. However, there are several changes to what was usually practiced in the High and Late Middle Ages and still at the beginning of the early modern times.

8.2.1 Medieval Graves

The usually disordered layout and the many overlaps of burials in medieval churchyards vividly prove that permanent markers of graves were not present. On late medieval depictions of churchyards normally only a few wooden crosses are to be seen. Also wooden posts or boards could serve as temporary signs (Illi, 1992, p. 42), as they are archaeologically verified from Konstanz (Berszin, 1999, p. 130). The shape of the burial was very simple. Into the prepared pit the corpse could be placed in a linen shroud or a wooden coffin. In history textbooks especially, mainly working from written sources, it is often claimed that burials without coffins and only in a shroud were the rule during the Middle Ages (e.g. Dieffenbach & Sörries, 1994, p. 37). The reason for this opinion lies perhaps in the numerous prohibitions of burials in coffins, handed down from the 16th century onward. For example, a burial using a coffin is declared inadmissible for Zwickau in 1561 (Langer, 1907, p. 5). Yet these prohibitions go together with times of epidemics, a massive growth of population and the efforts mentioned above to move cemeteries outside of towns. One may assume therefore that hygienic reasons and overcrowding were the primary motive behind the restrictions of the slowly rotting coffins.

The archaeological record shows a more differentiated picture, but does not allow any chronological or regional grouping. The number of burials without coffins, compared to those with coffins, differs widely in the examined cemeteries. For example all the dead from the 11th to the 13th century excavated around the church discovered under the Rathausmarkt in Schleswig, were buried in coffins made from wooden boards (Lüdtke, 1997, p. 24). In the burial place of the Holy Ghost Hospital in Konstanz, coffins were only seldom used (Berszin, 1999, pp. 129ff). In the Frauenkirchhof in Dresden, coffins were used in a tenth of all burials of the 11th to 15th centuries (Gliwitzky & Beutmann, 2006, p. 158). Coffins were, on the other hand, absolutely normal even in some rural contexts during the entire High and Late Middle Ages, as discoveries from Breunsdorf (Kenzler, 2002, p. 151) or Groß Lieskow near Cottbus (Petzel & Wetzel, 1984, p. 87) show. The use of a simple wooden coffin was apparently not a financial question or one of high social status.

8.2.2 Post-medieval Graves

It is only with the 17th century that first clear modifications begin for the majority of burials. As has been noted above, orderly rows of graves, all situated at the same generous distance to each other, can be observed from this time on (Fig. 8.1). Thus an individual burial plot could be occupied for a longer period. Other graveyards show a corresponding evolution, but only at a later time. One of the best documented cemeteries is the one in Schwyz, Switzerland, where the new order became completely established only in the 18th century (cf. Descœudres, 1995, pp. 52ff., figs. 18 and 21). But beginning

at the end of the 17th century a new order to the graves could be observed here, when the dead were no longer exclusively oriented to the east. Now tombs were oriented towards the paths, and therefore to visitors to the cemetery (Descœudres, 1995, p. 78). An increased importance on individual memory by relatives and friends of the dead can be observed, which superseded the old burial patterns even in Catholic areas.

Above ground, graves were normally marked by a tombstone. This, however, is difficult to prove archaeologically. The U-shaped foundation of a tombstone behind the head of a burial in the Cottbus cemetery (Petzold, 2004, fig. 5) is a rare exception. All tombstones known from Breunsdorf were discovered in secondary use. These stones were removed from the graves and used as building material in local farmsteads or to secure the bank of the village brook. The individual commemoration of the dead in Breunsdorf lasted for about 100 years as is shown by some well-dated tombstones in connection with building activities, documented in the written sources (Kenzler, 2002, p. 160).

During the 17th century the use of a coffin for the burial became the rule, but it was still admissible to be buried without a coffin until late into the 19th century. Only the introduction of mortuaries with a storage time of 48 hours made the utilisation of coffins urgently necessary, due to hygienic reasons (Sörries, 2002, p. 262). Beginning in the Baroque, the coffin was used more and more for representation, because it was visible to everyone during the laying out. Elaborate forms and expensive materials were first used by the nobility but trickled down to the funerals of urban inhabitants and eventually those in rural settlements. Consequently the inside lining with cloths and pillows differed according to the status and wealth of the deceased. This is equally valid for Catholic and Protestant areas. Denominational differences exist solely in the symbols found in paintings or metal fittings. Protestant coffins, for instance, were often painted with biblical quotes (Diefenbach & Sörries, 1994, p. 39f.).

8.3 The Appearance of Burials

The most obvious differences between medieval, Catholic and Protestant burials exist in the matter of grave goods. Other minor differences can be observed in the position of the arms.

Medieval burials are mostly homogeneous and simple. They lack any individuality. Burials in the eighth century do not differ from those in the 15th century. The dead lay at full length on their back and were oriented to the east. On Judgement Day, the return of Christ was

expected from the direction of the rising sun and of Jerusalem, the town in which Jesus died. The arms normally lay alongside the body. Particularly toward the end of the Middle Ages they could also be crossed on the stomach or chest. Another possibility was that the hands were folded in the lap or on the stomach in a gesture of prayer (Kenzler, 2002, p. 151f.), therefore depicting a religious act in the archaeological record (Fig. 8.4).



Figure 8.4: Two burials from the Breunsdorf cemetery. A high Medieval (above) and a 19th-century burial from the Breunsdorf cemetery (Sächsisches Landesamt für Archäologie).

The majority of the burials in Christianised Europe did not contain grave goods after the eighth century. In older literature their absence is usually explained by the adoption of the Christian religion, ignoring the fact that several generations still continued to practise the supposed pagan custom of furnishing the grave with material goods. Nevertheless there are also specific Christian items in early medieval graves, such as the well-known gold-leaf crosses. It has to be made clear that there is no such thing as a Christian prohibition of grave goods in the Middle Ages.

Numerous contemporary writings, in which the robbery of graves is denounced, show that the church still expected and tolerated grave goods until the beginning of the tenth

century. The church did not subject the enclosure of grave goods to punishment. On the contrary the practice continued in the case of the nobility and the clergy at least until the time of Charles the Great, without the church having protested against it (Reindel, 1995, pp. 142ff.). Grave goods that emphasised the official functions and the status of the elites find multiple archaeological confirmations (e.g. Brandt, 1988; Meier, 2002). The reason why this custom eventually ends for the majority of burials cannot be answered here. There were no firm ideas at the time propounding that everyone had to leave the world just as he or she had entered it. Changes in the property rights, on the other hand, as well as increasing grave robbery might more likely have played a role. Following another theory, donations by the bereaved to the church as an institution replaced the valuables previously used to supply the graves.

Grave goods are a rare exception in average high or late medieval burials. Metal belt mounts and shoe buckles point to a clothed body (Sándor-Pröschold & Sanke, 2002, pp. 303ff.). Small metal hooks and eyes may have been part of the usual dress or a specific burial gown. In the widest sense pilgrim badges, which were sewn onto the clothing, can be counted as dress accessories. Their inclusion in the grave was certainly founded in the religious belief of the buried persons, who hoped for compensation for the cumbersome pilgrimage in the afterlife. The most frequent pilgrim badge of the Middle Ages, known from church burials from the 11th up to the 14th century, is the scallop shell, sold in Santiago de Compostela (Haasis-Berner, 1995). Wooden crosses, which were uncovered inside the coffins of some burials in the late medieval Frauenkirchhof in Dresden (Gliwitztky & Beutmann, 2006, p. 158) are also Christian items. Other grave goods are very rare. Apart from the occasionally found coins, they are singular items. A small bronze box containing seeds from the Franciscan monastery in Zwickau, which possibly held personal meaning for the buried person, may be counted as one such example (Kroker, 1988, p. 106, Abb. 19).

8.4 The Appearance of Post-medieval Burials

When compared to the medieval period, the Reformation caused no immediate change in the furnishing of the graves. The custom of grave goods can be seen to a greater extent beginning in the 17th century and among Catholics and Protestants alike (Kenzler, 2009, p. 150). From this point on, not only the clerical and secular elites but almost all classes of population are represented. As far as can be suggested by the so-far selective investigations, the custom presumably began to spread from the nobility and clergy to the urban townsfolk and monastery

communities, and then to the rural population.

8.4.1 Clothing

From the Baroque period onwards most of the deceased were buried dressed. The main reason was the laying out of the body, which now became very common. For the middle class and in the countryside, the laying out was done at home. Persons of higher status were presented in the church (Goy, 1969, p. 205). The dead had to be dressed and prepared adequately, since the laying out served as the representation and therefore ultimately the public presentation of status. Therefore almost all the deceased in Breunsdorf were buried in their festive clothing, until well into the 20th century. The women, moreover, wore their own jewellery such as rings, brooches, earrings, necklaces and hair pins (Kenzler, 2009, p. 146, Abb. 6). Many further examples of burials in festive or everyday clothing can be found. Dresses in a more or less good state of preservation or with obvious signs of use have, for example, been recorded archaeologically in the tomb of the Grafen of Sulz in Tiengen on the Rhein (Fingerlin, 1992), the Domhof in Passau (Mittermeier, 1993, p. 32), the churchyard of Wörth in the Staffelsee (Haas-Gebhard, 2000, p. 285) or the Praemonstratensian monastery in Speinshart (Sándor-Pröschold & Sanke, 2002, p. 300).

Apart from regular dress, the deceased could be dressed in a special burial gown. These burial gowns are found with both denominations and might already be a reaction to the expense of supplying dress for the dead. This had already been described for the rural settlements of the dioceses of Bamberg and Nuremberg in the time around 1800 (Goy, 1969: 205). The general lack of dress components in baroque graves, as observed in the cemeteries of Klosterneuburg (Neugebauer, 1979, p. 206) and Brandenburger Neustadt (Rathert, 1997, p. 81), can be interpreted archaeologically as an indication of the use of burial gowns. On the other hand, such gowns do not have to be simple at all. In the Johannes church in Crailsheim bodies were found that were wrapped in wide garments, richly adorned with silk ribbons and affixed bows (Fehring & Stachel, 1967, p. 29).

8.4.2 Religious Objects

Significant differences between the two denominations existed with regard to the objects that referred to the belief of the buried person. As a rule, in Catholic areas paternosters or rosaries were placed in the graves, where they can be found around the hands folded in prayer (Fig. 8.5).

From the 17th century the now standardized rosary with a given number of beads can be found in almost all graves. Only burials of babies or children may be excluded (e.g. Fingerlin, 1992, p. 182; Grünewald, 2001, p. 24; Haas-Gebhard, 2000, p. 285; Mittermeier, 1993, pp. 29ff.; Sándor-Pröschold & Sanke, 2002, pp. 309ff. and p. 340).

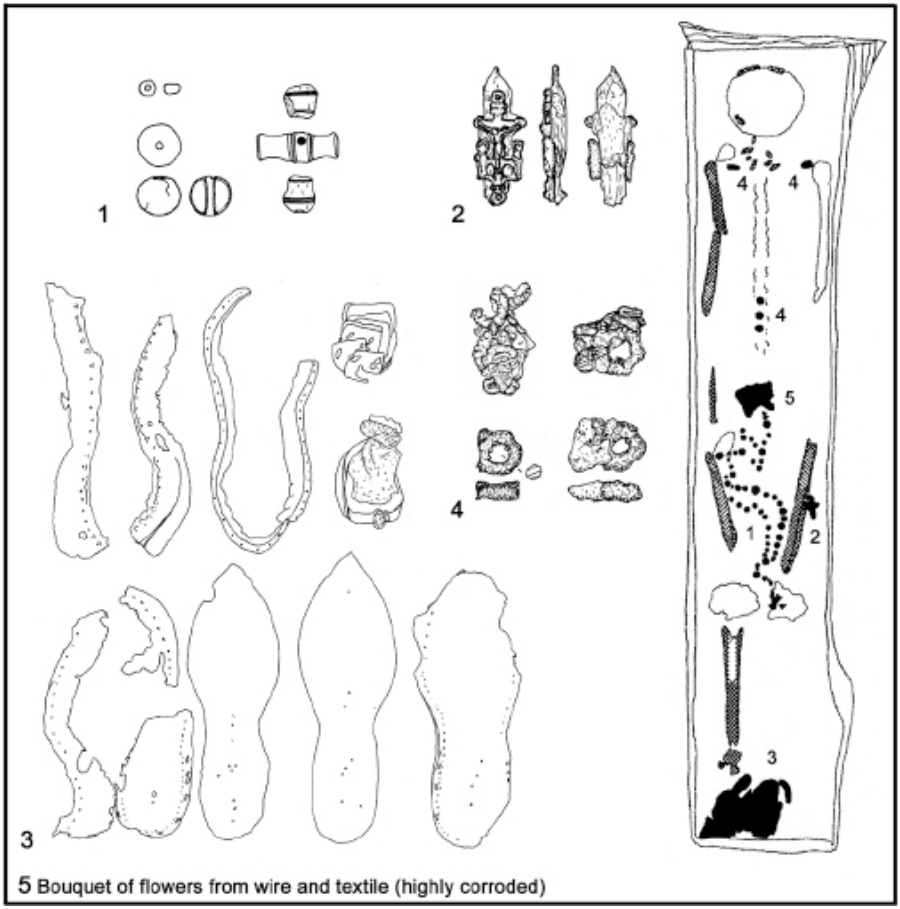


Figure 8.5: Catholic burial from Neudorf near Coburg (after Schenk 2008, grave II, fig. 109 and 120-123).

The inclusion of the rosary cannot always be regarded as an expression of popular belief. In some cases it had to be introduced by force by the authorities. For example there is a decree of Duke Maximilian I. from 1640, according to which everyone of the hitherto negligent rural population must acquire a rosary (Mittelstraß, 2007, p. 23f.). The rosaries from the graves were normally the personal possessions of the deceased or the family. This is evidenced by the numerous excavated pendants, pilgrim medals, crucifixes and amulets which were affixed to the rosaries and gave them an individual appearance. Less common are so-called 'crosses of the dying' (*Totenkreuze*) among Catholics. These are crosses the dying had in their hand while asking for divine assistance and consolation (Fingerlin, 1992, p. 181). These crosses could also be put into the hands of the body during the laying out. Throughout the early modern

period, they were elaborately worked and sometimes contained relics. They were not always in the possession of the family but were lent out to the needy (Schenk, 2008, pp. 36ff.). Hence they rarely went into the grave. One such cross was found in Passau (Mittermeier, 1993, p. 31f., fig. 34).

It is striking that grave goods which refer directly to the beliefs of the deceased are to be found mainly in Catholic areas. Here they were the rule, independent of social class. The appearance of Catholic-specific grave goods began during Baroque times and their inclusion may be associated with the laying out of the body as well, since rosaries and crosses were visible in the open coffin. Presumably there is a close connection with the Counter-Reformation that put a strong emphasis on symbolism which stressed the Catholic identity and served to distinguish Catholics from Protestants at the same time. Since the Reformers had eliminated comparable symbols and also refused the pilgrimage, the lack of corresponding grave goods in Protestant burials is not surprising. Only the occasional hymnbooks give direct information about the belief of the deceased. In Breunsdorf seven graves from the end of the 17th century and up to the 19th century contained remains of books (Kenzler, 2002, 157, pp. 162ff.). Three of these were church burials, which indicate a higher social status. Further finds from excavations are extremely rare, although book clasps are normally comparatively well preserved. The same is true for books in Catholic burials. Only a few books, which are interpreted as prayer books, were found in Passau (Mittermeier, 1993, p. 31).

8.4.3 Objects of Taboo

A number of items, with which the deceased had contact or which were part of his or her worldly goods, were prohibited from use by the surviving family. For that reason they were placed into the grave in some regions and destroyed in others. For the area and time examined in this paper the objects used for the preparation of the corpse, in particular the washbowls, are best known. Several times, washbowls were recorded archaeologically on urban and rural burials grounds of the 18th to 20th century (cf. Kenzler, 2001, pp. 26ff., fig. 8; Thier 1999, pp. 147ff., Abb. 3). Their inclusion is particularly comprehensively documented for Breunsdorf (Fig. 8.6). Here, almost every burial between the 18th and 19th centuries contained a deep vessel with a wide opening. Only in the early 20th century did this burial custom vanish (Kenzler, 2002, p. 156). The interpretation that these were indeed washing vessels, whose further use would bring misfortune or death, is based on extensive

ethnological investigations (cf. Zender, 1959, p. 41; Zender, 1959-1964, p. 273f., fig. 29). However, other objects which were used during the preparation of the deceased for the laying out could bring disaster to the living (Zender, 1959-64, pp. 269ff.). Scissors, razors and combs especially should be mentioned here from the archaeological record, although they were found far less frequently in the coffins in Breunsdorf (Kenzler 2002, p. 156).

Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that each of these items could be put into the coffin for other motives. Scissors are often a typical grave good for women who died in childbirth, combs could be a dress accessory and razors can also be interpreted as personal possessions.

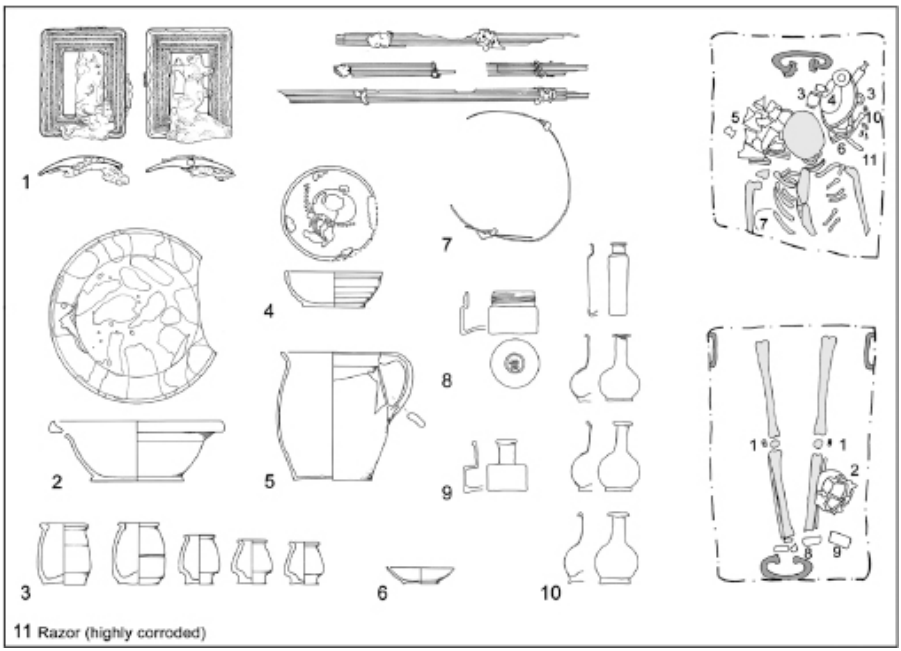


Figure 8.6: Protestant burial from Breunsdorf (after Kenzler 2002, grave 306, fig. 33 and 75).

The placement of medicine in the grave dates from the 18th to the 20th century as well and is archaeologically observable through the presence of glass vials or small stoneware pots. This custom is also known from different sites (Thier, 1999, p. 146f.), but again is especially well documented for the Breunsdorf cemetery. Here it is particularly common, from the 19th to the middle of the 20th century (Kenzler, 2002, p. 156). Like the washbowls, the medicine previously used by the deceased was an object of taboo (Zender, 1959-64, p. 264f.). Unlike the carefully selected and arranged clothing or the religious objects, washbowls, medicine vessels or other taboo objects should not be seen during the laying out. Therefore they were hidden under the body, under a blanket or under the pillow (Kenzler, 2002, p. 157).

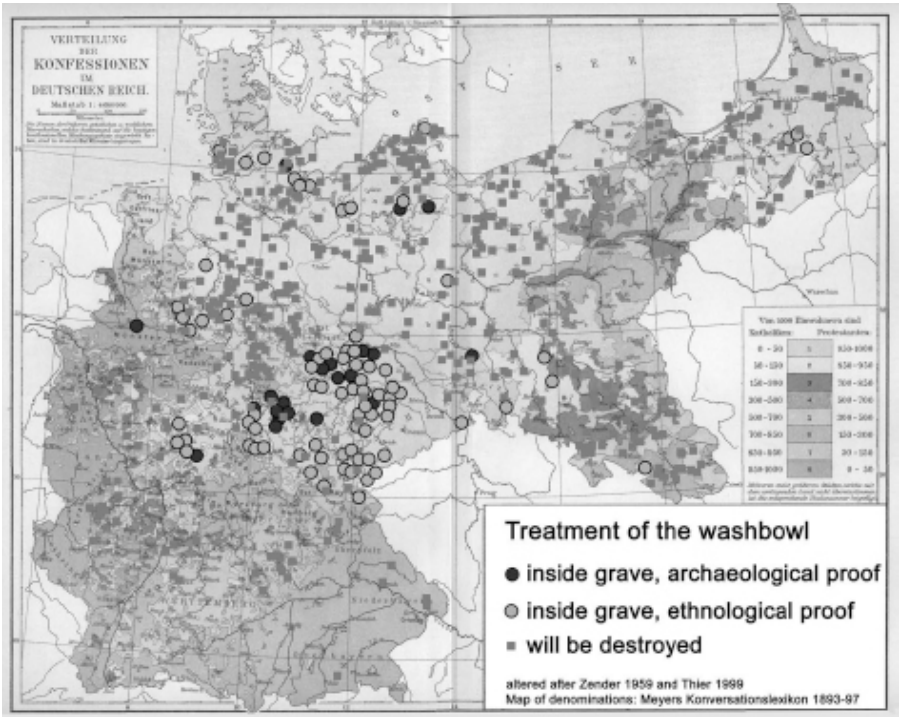


Figure 8.7: Washbowls in the funeral rite as a distinction between medieval and Protestant burials (supplemented and altered after Zender, 1959, fig. 29 and Their, 1999, fig. 3).

If one maps the ethnological and archaeological evidence of the furnishing of graves with washbowls together with the distribution of the denominations in the German Empire, it becomes very obvious that the washbowls are almost exclusively found in Protestant burials (Fig. 8.7). The picture becomes even clearer when one considers the intentional destruction of washbowls as well, which were not placed into the coffin in this case. The only exception so far known in a Catholic context is a burial with a bowl in the Clemens hospital in Münster. Since there are anatomically dissected skeletons among the dead who were buried in this cemetery, stemming from the second half of the 18th century, this bowl is probably not a washing vessel. The bowl was placed in an unusual position, on top of the skeleton and might have contained the inner organs withdrawn during the autopsy (Thier, 1999, p. 148).

Why taboo objects are found in Protestant graves, but not in Catholic ones, is a matter of conjecture. Protestantism had separated the world of the dead from the world of the living in a way Catholicism had never done. Nothing could be done any more for the soul of the deceased Protestant. Intercession on behalf of the dead was rejected, as well as the

role of the saints as intermediaries for salvation. As a consequence the traditional burial places in the churchyard and the church were replaced more consistently for Protestants with cemeteries outside the gates of the towns than was

the case in Catholic belief. For Protestants the culture of mourning turned more and more to this world. It was not the dead who stood in the centre now, but the living (Fischer, 2001, p. 15f.). The radical change of the burial customs in Protestantism, in addition to a general sense of insecurity in the first one or two generations, may eventually have led to an increased fear of death and the dead, which ended later in 'superstitious' ideas. This would also explain the late origin of the custom to put taboo objects into the coffin or to destroy them. Although the archaeological sources are still too sparse for such statements, the placement of washbowls or medicine inside coffins seems to appear more frequently in the rural areas than in the towns. This would support the thesis that not progressive hygienic ideas but rather popular belief was the basis of the custom. The washing of the dead in Catholic as well as Protestant areas was a neighbourhood service. This is surely why vessels belonging to the family of the deceased were used. In the second half of the 19th century there were certain women in the towns who took over the washing and other tasks around the dead as a kind of local service. During this time the first commercial undertakers also established their business (Fischer, 2001, p. 48), which put an end to the inclusion of washbowls.

8.4.4 Further Grave Goods

A whole series of objects from early modern and modern graves were personal possessions of the dead. For instance in Breunsdorf eyeglasses, keys and tobacco pipes were discovered (Kenzler, 2002, p. 157). Further objects from this category are known through ethnological studies, such as cards, bottles of alcohol or cigars (Zender, 1959, p. 39). Even today such grave goods are not unusual in inhumations, as can be gathered from conversations with undertakers. Since these types of objects are rare in the archaeological record and the majority date to the 18th and 19th centuries, it is presumably a comparatively young custom. More extensive archaeological research has dealt exclusively with the findings of tobacco pipes in grave contexts (Kluttig-Altmann, 2007). The tobacco pipes always show traces of use and were apparently smoked eagerly by the buried persons, which can be evidenced by characteristic signs of wear on their teeth. They were probably laid into the coffin by relatives or friends as a last act of favour. Although the majority of examples come from Protestant areas, pipes were also found in Catholic burials. As far as these are concerned they seemingly differ from the other mentioned objects. Object of personal possession found in Catholic graves were almost exclusively items referring to social status, such as a bronze spoon or an iron dagger from Passau (Mittermeier, 1993, p. 32). The same

can be said for a sword dating to the first quarter of the 16th century, from the monastery in Speinshart (Sándor-Pröschold & Sanke, 2002, p. 324f.) and another from the second half of the 17th century, found in the Protestant Johannes Church of Crailsheim (Fehring & Stachel, 1967, p. 28f.). Perhaps the increased number

of grave goods of personal belongings in Protestant contexts goes back to the popular belief that favourite objects might be desired by the deceased and are therefore better deposited in the coffin (Zender, 1959-1964, p. 336). This would be further proof of the greater spreading of 'superstitious' ideas in the Protestant burial custom.

There still are a great number of additional grave goods which were enclosed as an exception or as part of a fixed burial custom. Many are known from ethnological studies alone, because their material decays in the ground and cannot be evidenced by archaeology (cf. Zender, 1959-1964). Therefore nothing is known about the time of origin of these customs. Denominational differences have not yet been identified. This is why only the archaeologically traceable funeral crowns and coins are to be dealt with here.

Funeral crowns belong to the grave goods denoting status. They signified blameless girls and young men who died unmarried. The custom might refer to the weddings of dead persons known in antiquity. It enabled the unwedded deceased to marry, since marriage was seen as the climax of life. The idea could have been picked up again in the course of the enthusiasm for antiquity during the Renaissance. More compatible with Christian belief is the interpretation of the funeral crown as an honour that was only bestowed in case of honourable moral conduct (e.g. Schenk, 2008, p. 39f.). The earliest evidence of the use of funeral wreaths or crowns can be found on the tombstones of noble children in the 16th century (cf. Lippok, 2009).

Coins belong to the common finds in graves, particularly in burials of the 18th to the 20th centuries. Before this period, they can occasionally be found but remain coincidental and are strongly limited to certain regions (Kenzler, 2002, p. 157). Coins are particularly interesting for the archaeologist because of the possibility of absolute dating, which cannot be done otherwise with the desired accuracy in many modern contexts. Motives for the addition of coins might lie in a toll for the passage to heaven's gate, to buy a place in the cemetery, or as a symbolic price for their personal possessions which the dead person received so as not to bring disaster onto surviving family members. It cannot yet be determined whether differences in the geographical distribution of the custom or the location of coins in the grave correspond to denominational borders.

8.5 Conclusion

Religious rites find a firm anchoring in the material culture of many societies, so the study of graves allows the archaeologist to recognise

changes in the common ideas of belief. Social actions and material signs are used very consciously as criteria of distinction between different ideas of belief and social groups. However, it needs a certain time span until social developments and changing religious beliefs are manifested in the burial custom since this usually tends to be very conservative. So at first the Reformation in the German-speaking countries led to no visible change in

the excavated burials. The Reformers did not wish to change the simple, unfurnished medieval graves. But the end of posthumous intercessions necessarily led to a spatial expression. So a strong effort of many towns to separate their cemeteries from the churches and to move them outside the gates becomes visible. However, this change in the location may have been enforced due to hygienic reasons and soon affected Catholic areas in the same way. But if an individual burial place expressed the high social status of a deceased or his family, as in church burials, the grave would remain untouched. Therefore, the significant changes in burial customs since the late 16th and the early 17th centuries do not go back directly to the Reformation. Only two or more generations later did Catholic and Protestant burials become distinguishable by furnished or missing items of belief and other grave goods. These changes were mainly due to an individualisation of death in wider parts of the population during the Baroque period, compared to the anonymous dead of the earlier periods. Death was now increasingly used for the representation of social statusby the family of the deceased.

However, the dissolution of old patterns of belief through the Reformation smoothed the way for these changes. The fact that Protestantism offered alternatives to the previous belief system meant the end of a universal religious interpretation and burial practice. Changes not only occurred with burials in Protestant areas, but – in particular through the Counter Reformation – also in the Catholic parts of Germany. In this connection material culture is not only used to express status, but to separate the denominations from each other. Catholic priests were buried differently than were laymen. Rosaries were given in almost all Catholic graves, wound around the hands that were folded for prayer. In Protestant graves such requisites of belief are very rare; also a particular gesture of prayer was seldom observed. On the other hand objects of taboo such as the tools for the preparation of the corpse (e.g. washbowls, combs and razors) or medicine previously used by the deceased are exclusively found in Protestant burials. In certain cemeteries there is no 18th- or 19th-century grave without them. It was believed that anyone who would use these items would have to follow the deceased into the grave. Obviously the greater separation of the dead from the living played a major role here, which led to a greater fear of the dead in Protestant areas. Since these ideas were a matter of common belief and were not supported by the church, some regionally very diverse customs developed. In contrast, the Catholic areas are much more uniform in the archaeologically visible funeral rites. Eventually, the taking over of many services around the funeral by commercial undertakers put an end to most of the described customs. Today there are hardly any differences between Catholic and Protestant burials in their material remains.

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1 So a roman council restricted the effect of the relics onto a vicinity of 60 steps for the main churches and 30 steps for the chapels in the year 1058 (Werner & Werner, 1988, p. 247).

2 Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Legum Sectio III, Concilia II 1. Hannover 1906, 274.

Sian Anthony

9 Hiding the Body: Ordering Space and Allowing Manipulation of Body Parts within Modern Cemeteries

Introduction

For an urban citizen, to be buried in the 18th century was to know that their body would be added to the traditional parish churchyards. This would involve the burial being placed in a small, crowded and chaotic place used for many centuries and inadequate for the growing population. The churchyards were often poorly managed or simply lacked the space for new burials so that even the best management practices could not cope (Sommer, 2003, p. 84; Tarlow, 1999, p. 126). As a locale within the urban environment cemeteries contributed to the crowded and contested space, pitching the dead against the living, and they were the scene for some of the disputes between communities and municipal authorities. The replacement of the traditional churchyard by large, new city cemeteries from the late 18th century is one of the many municipal acts of refurbishment that permanently altered the activities taking place within the urban core. These new city cemeteries are largely defined by several common features: their connection with a fast-growing urban settlement but their location outside of it; their replacement of traditional parish churchyards; the lack of a parish church, replaced only by a burial chapel; design by architects often through competition. There is regional and chronological variation in the new city cemeteries but the majority are labelled as garden or landscape cemeteries due to design influences from naturalistic landscaping in private parks (Tarlow, 2000, p. 222). However, all the modern cemeteries present the impression of ordered space comprising regulated rows of plots with defined boundaries that, amongst other consequences, prevent disturbance of earlier graves. The visitor expects, and is expected, to extend this impression below ground, to create an internal template of the peaceful deceased lying below. The dead lie encased in coffins, in situ and undisturbed, and of course unseen. Examination of documentary evidence supports this ordered image with cemetery plans and burial registers seemingly recording the exact location and number of burials. However, there is a tension between the ideas concerning the ground which can be walked upon and observed

on a daily basis and what is hidden within the soil. The metaphor of up/down is commonly used in archaeology (Holtorf, 2005, p. 16) but the activities that occur below-ground can be interpreted as concealed and therefore having the potential to be unregulated.

Human bone forms the largest set of material within cemeteries – in the form of undisturbed skeletons but also re-deposited bone. When burials are disturbed through natural processes or human activities, skeletons and funerary material culture can be broken up and moved. Re-deposited bones can be found scattered within the cemetery soil or specifically arranged and manipulated within secondary graves or specially-built ossuaries or charnel houses. These activities are inevitably found within the small burial grounds around Christian churches which served large populations and resulted in grave pits being dug through earlier burials. Such practices were among those that were intended to cease when new cemeteries began to be established from the late 18th century in Europe and North America. Formal codified practices were created by the founders within each new cemetery to end the activities that had been common in older churchyards.



Figure 9.1: Assistens Kirkegård, Copenhagen. Photo: Metroselskabet/Dragør Luftfoto

Therefore during the excavation of a 19th to 20th century cemetery – Assistens Kirkegård in Copenhagen (Fig. 9.1) - one of the unanticipated findings was the identification of manipulation of re-deposited bones by human actions. There were bones arranged under coffins or layers of pine branches, or placed within other coffins. Other arrangements of bones were found gathered in the corner of grave cuts or placed on top of other coffin lids, reminiscent of activities within earlier traditional churchyards. Yet these activities in Assistens Kirkegård were taking place within a

modern landscape cemetery which aimed to be the very opposite to the type of burial grounds they replaced: a parish churchyard representing long use with centuries of burials tightly squeezed into an overcrowded space. Yet in some European cemeteries such as Copenhagen, grave space is not bought for eternity but for a minimum period of 20 years (KøbenhavnsKommune, 2013) and this practice challenges the idea of undisturbed and unchanging cemeteries. After this finite period the ownership of the plot can be extended or it can be emptied of any contents and re-used. There are regulations covering the clearance of grave plots and the removal or disposal of human bone. Yet when comparing these regulations and the ordered image of a cemetery to the archaeological evidence there is a dissonance between these sources. The evidence lends itself to the examination of the interplay between what was meant to happen (the orthodox and orthoprax) with the everyday practices that occurred on the site. Why was there evidence of careful and deliberate re-deposition of human bone in a regulated modern cemetery? What was the relationship between these actions and the perception of an ordered space in a landscape cemetery?

9.1 Research into Landscape Cemeteries and Modern Funerary Behaviour

Landscape cemeteries have been an extremely successful solution to the disposal of the dead in the modern world, particularly in Europe and North America. They are a phenomenon stemming from Enlightenment ideas that spread rapidly, formed partly out of the larger movement to rationalise and cleanse urban areas of noxious and unhealthy industries and activities at the same time as improving the mind-set and attitudes of the people (Tarlow, 2007). A mixture of poor management and lack of capacity in the traditional urban churchyards had resulted in chaotic and unhygienic environments unable to cope with the burial of increasingly large urban populations. In Europe the new city cemeteries were largely planned by secular authorities although sometimes private companies took the initiative in establishment (Rugg, 1998). Church authorities were involved but tended not to be the primary instigators. These new cemeteries can be considered parts of an authoritarian response to urban conditions and later to the demands of the industrialising world of the 19th century. There is also a continued tendency to try to order and control the processes around death and the body and to move them away from the living community both in terms of the medicalisation of death (Porter, 2005) and of secularisation in the removal away from religious authorities (Worpole, 2003, p. 12). The new

cemeteries also became an important part of how the urban authorities viewed themselves. A new cemetery was a status symbol, as much as a practical element, of the new ideals of urban planning which were popular in this period. These 18th and 19th century ideals are still, with some modifications, influencing cemeteries today. Common features of the design allowed space to be organised and efficient: this was evident not only in shaping the

borders of the cemetery as a carefully-defined entity within itself, but also in the rows of grave plots and the location of the memorial chapels and administration offices. In traditional churchyards in Scandinavia there were areas or zones structured according to status or gender, which were created in reference to the church building and the placement of west-east oriented burials according to the common Christian practice (Jonsson 2009). These principles were not continued in the new cemeteries. Specific rows or areas were charged at different rates based on the visual or spatial attributes of the plot, creating zones within the cemetery according to the ability to pay. The design and the activities within the cemetery were regulated in order to create a different kind of place from that of the established parochial churchyards that had been in use. This change in practice affected not only the physical aspects of the cemetery but also the behaviour of those who worked within it and those who visited. The new ideas about cemeteries can also be suggested as controlling what happened to the dead within the cemetery, because the human and material cultural remains were also subject to regulation long after death.

Investigation of modern cemeteries is commonly focused on the above-ground aspects: their definition, development and place in society (Fjord Jensen, 2002; Johnson, 2008; Rugg, 1998; Schönbäck, 2008; Sommer, 2008), their adaptations to new technology and behaviours (Flohr Sørensen, 2009, 2011; Williams, 2011) and memorialisation expressed through material culture (Kryger, 1985; Mytum, 2006; Tarlow, 1999). There are however limits in the study of below-ground aspects. To my knowledge, the project at Assistens Kirkegård is the only large-scale archaeologically supervised excavation of a landscape cemetery (Anthony et al., 2011). Occasional small-scale or individual exhumations are carried out by cemetery staff or exhumation companies but these are generally performed without archaeological recording. This makes the research at Assistens Kirkegård vital in interpreting links between documented funerary behaviour and cemetery practices. Examination of below-ground material cultural evidence tends to be from traditional churchyards or private burial grounds that often extended into the mid-19th century (for example Brickley et al., 2006; Grønfeldt Petersen, 2012; Tagesson, 2007; Thomsen, 2008). While these serve as comparative examples for earlier periods of some cemeteries, they do not extend into the 20th century and are not from the same context as landscape cemeteries. Therefore study of comparative funeral rites and material culture has been largely focused upon historical or ethnographic research (e.g. Åhren Snickare, 2002; Kragh, 2003). There has also been exploration of the development and practices of professional undertakers (Davidsson Bremborg, 2002; Litten, 1997) yet little research into the work of modern gravediggers.

Therefore research on aspects of funeral behaviour and cemetery practices of the later 19th and 20th centuries can develop through the research based on the Copenhagen material. The interpretation of the manipulation and redeposition of human bones examined in this article is only one aspect of this research. The data on material culture, funerary behaviour and cemetery work practices form the core of my ongoing PhD research.

9.2 Dealing with Re-deposited Human Bone

Within crowded cemeteries there will always be residual or re-deposited bones expected within the soil, and cemetery excavators should prepare for this possibility. Bone re-deposition is promoted by taphonomic activity such as animal burrowing and movement, and collapse of coffin structures leading to a movement of bones, ground water or decomposition fluids which can also move bones particularly within the void of a coffin (Duday, 2009; Lyman, 1994). Then there is taphonomic activity resulting from humans, whether new burials, exhumations or cemetery maintenance. These natural and cultural processes may be archaeologically indistinguishable. Re-deposition refers to the movement of bones after first entering the archaeological record, in this instance from an in situ burial involving an articulated skeleton. This movement can be affected by natural processes of decay or animal activity but what is examined here primarily concerns human actions. To distinguish the human activity in this article the term 'charnel deposit' is used. Originally, charnel referred to a place where human bones were collected and stored after they had been buried for a limited time in order for the soft tissue to decay – a charnel house or ossuary. The idea of charnel deposits is extended in this context to refer to a deliberate disturbance, collection and re-deposition of bones within the buried environment of the grave and cemetery soil.

The ubiquity of bones on archaeological sites often results in limited recording and interpretation. The focus of any project will be to gain the maximum results or interpretations from restricted resources that fit the objectives of the project. Therefore residual or re-deposited bones can be seen, quite legitimately, as a low priority. There are two problems with this stance; one is that simply, although they may no longer form an intact and in situ human body, they still represent parts of somebody who was once human. Any justification that archaeological research on skeletal remains is a form of respectful investigation should consider, in some form, these re-deposited bones too. Secondly, study and analysis of re-deposited bones can provide great potential for interpretation which counts for more than the examination of them as human bone objects. There is an unrivalled opportunity to view them as the products of secondary burial activity that form part of cemetery or burial practices. Within prehistoric cemeteries secondary activities – the use, movement and re-deposition of parts of the human body – is a long established research area (for example Nilsson Stutz, 2003) which are used to link rituals concerning death and grieving and show how they are bound up with the living society. This evidence of mortuary practice

is an aspect of post-medieval burials that is neglected in comparison with human osteology.

There is also consideration of secondary deposition or movement within Christian cemeteries and churchyards which may be related to the movement of specific individuals such as the movement of saint's bones (translation) or noble bodies, but is often based on the more prosaic movement of bodies within busy cemeteries. It was

not the norm in Christian practice in post-medieval Denmark or northern Europe to disinter all bodies after decay of the soft tissue (Gilchrist & Sloane, 2005, p. 194), but disturbance or truncation does occur in cemeteries, whether deliberate or the result of unforeseen circumstances. In some cemeteries the problem of disarticulated bone was dealt with by the provision of charnel houses or vaults. Surviving medieval examples are now rare but one was excavated at St Mary Spital, London. Christian charnel houses exist in cities such as Brno, Czech Republic or Köln, Germany (Koudounaris, 2011). Other charnel facilities such as the Parisian catacombs (Etlin, 1984), were created specifically for the purpose of cleansing crowded urban churchyards. Secondary deposition in Christian cemeteries does occur, and differentiation can be made between scattered bones found within the soil and evidence for deliberate placement of bones. Both may be the consequence of wishing to create more room within a restricted space as bones, like most irregularly shaped objects, are more easily packed when organised than if placed randomly (or anatomically!). Deposition may also result as a consequence of intention related to the wish to respect the bones as human remains, although this is difficult to prove archaeologically despite efforts to classify secondary disturbance through intention (Chroustovskýa & Průchová, 2011). Disturbance can also result from grave robbing. This may be difficult to identify securely, although there is some evidence for this from interpreting the stratigraphic sequence with the disturbance of the coffin and contents in Assistens Kirkegård (Anthony et al., 2011). The movement of burials in Christian cemeteries in Europe is therefore not a new concept. However interpreting or separating these actions by intention causes logical problems when dealing with the material evidence (Giddens, 1984, p. 11). It can be impossible to identify the difference between intended acts and unintended consequences of actions when dealing with below-ground deposits of bones. When gravediggers excavate for a new grave is their intention also to disturb an older pre-existing burial, or is the disturbance an unforeseen by-product of making a new grave? These intentions cannot be separated when interpreting the archaeological record. However gravediggers do have some opportunity to choose their activities in creating the grave and re-depositing bones. The cyclical reproduction of these actions can also be linked with institutional practices of the cemetery authorities. An archaeological focus on these supposedly insignificant acts or practices can reveal the embodied nature of social systems and reproduce them in each act (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 168-169).

9.3 Material and Method

The material evidence examined is from one site – Assistens Kirkegård, a cemetery situated within the northern neighbourhood of Copenhagen. It was originally established in 1785 in open fields outside of the demarcated medieval city core to provide new burial space for different parish churches within the city (Helweg, 2010).

Expanded in 1804, Assistens Kirkegård remains a working cemetery although the number of new burials is restricted. Work in advance of construction in the north-eastern corner of the cemetery resulted in excavation of circa 1000 burials of coffins and cremation urns dated from 1807 up to the 1970s. Information was gained on how the cemetery was managed from both above- and below-ground perspectives. Complementing the archaeological evidence is the documentary information including cemetery plans, burial registers and cemetery protocols where the rules and regulations are defined. However despite the wealth of information on the people buried within this section of the cemetery there has not been the opportunity to identify all of the burials to either family grave plots or as named individuals. The documentary evidence does not always correspond to the archaeological remains excavated leaving an interesting gap to investigate.

Cemetery regulations stipulated that removed skeletons should be carefully managed but it was not anticipated that the re-deposited bone would form a prominent part of the analysis. Arrangements had been made to collect, count and record basic information relating to element and age. However it quickly became clear during excavation that there was more potential evidence in the stratigraphic sequences concerning the deposition patterns of re-deposited bones, so the archaeological recording was altered in response to this. Charnel deposits were identified by creating a definition to distinguish the difference between what might be interpreted as deliberate re-deposition and what might be random patterns. The definition was formed by examining the deposition patterns of the bones and also the type and number of bones, so a collection of at least five large and robust elements such as limb bones or a skull, possibly from many individuals, could be described as an intentional act to gather together bones for a particular purpose. However a single isolated skull was not defined as a charnel deposit unless there was some form of specific placement that could indicate a deliberate act of re-deposition. So for the purposes of the excavation a charnel deposit was defined as a large group of bones that required some form of intentional deliberate action and decision-making in its creation. The value of this particular definition can be debated but it served for the interim analysis and highlighted the potential information that could be gained from recording re-deposited bones during the excavation. Placing the re-deposition of bones within a single context framework resulted in an emphasis on the manipulation of bone as more than a simple by-product of digging a grave and clearing out the earlier inhabitants. It encouraged a more thoughtful response towards recording redeposited human bone, and was a reflexive form of recording which responded to archaeologists' experience during the excavation. The interpretation also connected with the decisions that

had to be made by the gravediggers in their daily work.

Manipulation of the contents of the burials – the bodies and funerary material culture – are revealed through this analysis, connecting practices through different synchronic events. The cemetery can be seen as a long-lived parchment, in which the digging of new graves is a text laid on after only partial erasure of the older

text (earlier graves) creating an ever-changing palimpsest in which the new cannot entirely wipe away the old, and indeed may preserve the only evidence of the old. Although a textual metaphor does not cover all of the performance of funerary and cemetery practices (Halsall, 2003, p. 67) it does create a feeling of layer upon layer of actions which transform bodies to skeletons and then to bones which can be more easily manipulated.

In Assistens Kirkegård there were over 200 charnel deposits where a large quantity of bone and occasionally other materials was identified as a defined observable action by gravediggers in the course of their daily work. Of these deposits, one third were suggested as part of some form of specific placement such as bones deposited together in one corner of a grave pit that could also suggest some form of concealment of their practices. It is likely that there were more examples of deliberate placement that were either disturbed by later burial, or were not identified through the definition used in the project. There is also the potential to examine changes through time within the cemetery practices but this requires further analysis and identification of more specific dating for the material.

9.4 Cemetery Working Practices at Assistens Kirkegård

Information on the working practices of the cemetery is obtained from the archaeological evidence from excavation and also documentary and oral sources from the cemetery office. Regulations exist from 1805 onwards which state the length of time that each type of grave plot can be bought for and if this length of time could be extended (Wiene, 2011). These protocols also defined working practices such as the required depth of the grave pit and minimum length of time that a burial legally had to lie undisturbed. This amounted to 20 years for a burial in a wooden coffin but 40 years for a burial within a metal coffin. The protocols also had regulations for what should happen in the event that the finite period of ownership of a grave plot had expired and the space was required for re-use. In this event any material remains were to be broken up, an extra pit was to be made at the base of the grave pit and the bones were to be placed within it. Other bones could be removed to a larger charnel pit within the cemetery. There seem to be no formal regulations concerning the disposal of any other form of material such as the coffin wood or personal items such as jewellery. If the protocols had been followed then all coffins would have been broken up and destroyed and all bones collected and placed in either in a new pit cut into the base of the original grave or in a charnel pit elsewhere on the cemetery. The evidence from the excavation clearly shows that the

regulations were not followed. Only two graves had additional small pits containing pieces of bone. This is directly contravening instructions for the disposal of re-deposited bones in the cemetery.

How often did removal of burials occur? There is no precise number for the total cemetery population buried on the site. The documentary records are of variable

quality, particularly in the early years, and some burials in grave plots do not appear to be recorded. Currently there is no documentary evidence found recording the clearance of grave plots when they were available for reuse. Therefore a comparison between total burial population and the frequency of charnel deposits is not possible. Burials may simply have been left undisturbed until necessary and it seems more pragmatic to leave the burials in situ until the grave plot was bought by a new owner and the space needed. Problems also arise when looking at the excavated evidence, as multiple deposits of charnel bone could have potentially derived from the same inhumation or indeed several individuals could be represented in a single charnel deposit. Comparing the number of excavated in situ coffinburials (854) with the recorded charnel deposits (circa 200) is also invalid as there are a large number of truncated burials recorded which may also have contributed to the charnel deposits. This would count the same burial twice. Research comparing the identified burials with documented grave plots continues to bring up unexpected results that do not match. With burials occurring perhaps on a daily basis as suggested by the burial registers (Wiene, 2011) then the everyday working practices of the gravediggers, particularly after the early years of the cemetery, would have included decisions concerning the manipulation and disposal of earlier remains. These decisions resulted in a variety of actions and deposits, the common forms of which are discussed below.

9.5 Deposition Patterns of Charnel Deposits

The majority of the charnel deposits were located within the grave fill directly associated around a newer coffin, placed either directly underneath but not in a pit (Group 939), or on the coffin lid (Group 925). Some deposits were put on the base of the grave cut and covered with pine branches (Group 271) or layers of clean soil (Group 883), with a new burial placed on top to disguise the fact that they were present. Some charnel deposits were placed within another coffin, leaving the in situ skeleton covered with layers of re-deposited charnel bone. Within one (Group 1532) was a lump hammer, presumably a tool lost during the breaking-up of the coffin and body to create a charnel deposit. A typical example combining documentary and archaeological evidence serves to illustrate cemetery management practices. A multiple-person grave plot (Grave plot 650) was bought for a family and two burials placed within it. After the time limit was exceeded the plot was bought by a new family, and within one year the two original burials were destroyed when the new burials were put in. One of the original skeletons was broken up and partially removed, except for the foot end of the coffin, a

new burial was placed on top. The second original skeleton and coffinwere also broken up, with the skeleton removed but the base of the coffin left in situ. The new coffin was then placed on top. Yet on the lid of this new burial was placed a charnel deposit (Group 730) with two skulls positioned on each corner of the north end of the coffin lid, and other bones laid on the lid. This was then covered

by 0.5m of soil, then a layer of broken up coffin wood, before the rest of the grave was filled in. What this example illustrates are the different reactions to the original burials in the cemetery. Within the space of one year there were two separate acts of destruction resulting in different decisions and consequent movements of remains, but partial remains of the two skeletons became mixed together in a single deposit and the skulls were placed deliberately on top of the most recent coffin. Several stages of manipulation were necessary to create this sequence of deposition. We also need to consider how the gravediggers dealt with bones while the committal of new coffins into the ground was carried out. Several acts of manipulation and concealment would have been necessary to create what was recorded by archaeologists.

The actions described illustrate what happens when a burial is broken up and disturbed; the once intact coffin and body become another type of object. The body is no longer an entity: it transforms into skeletal parts that can be easily manipulated. The coffin is simply wood to be broken up and burnt for firewood or possibly even reused as a form of grave marker. The objects become reclassified after a period of transition within the grave which makes them easier to manipulate by the gravedigger. It is unknown if this work took place openly in the cemetery or was hidden from mourners but the handling of some charnel deposits suggest considerable efforts to conceal these practices.

9.6 Manipulation within a Family Grave Plot

Some specific and sometimes unique examples of other forms of manipulation of bones and bodies within the cemetery at Assistens Kirkegård are now discussed. These examples do not describe a common or general pattern of what was observed, but illustrate some of the potential information that can be gained from examining and interpreting the re-deposition of bones within a modern cemetery.

Along the cemetery boundary walls there is a single row of expensive grave plots and a pathway. Adjacent to one grave plot (801) and within the pathway was found a large and shallow pit. The pit appeared to be related to construction of a wall – a below-ground boundary indicating the limits of the plot, and also removal of a previous burial clearance. Within the pit was a complete but re-deposited coffin (Group 74) containing a charnel deposit with two skulls deliberately placed together in the southwest corner (Fig. 9.2). The charnel consisted of the bones of two older adults, one male and one female. They were 80% complete but with a noticeable lack of smaller, more fragile elements. It was not clear if one represented the original skeleton from the coffin. The coffin lid

had been replaced, and all reburied in this unorthodox location. The adjacent grave plot was not fully excavated, but it is suggested that the reused coffin and the adjacent grave plot are associated. The coffin was used as a new receptacle for the bones and reburied as close as possible to the grave plot, perhaps to emphasise a connection despite being unseen from the surface. The amount of

bone recovered suggests very careful collection from its original burial context. The positioning of the skulls supports this idea of deliberate action.

The practices can be suggested as representing a pragmatic need for more space within a family grave plot. The consequences were that older burials were removed but kept within close vicinity rather than undergoing complete removal to a charnel pit. In the example discussed there was no hesitation in moving human remains and coffins to suit spatial needs, while maintaining an association with the original plot. Documentary evidence shows no change in ownership within this grave plot, it is used by the Rohde family from 1807-1956 with five recorded burials. It is possible that the first two adult burials were removed from their grave after 25 years in situ to create space for the later graves. The bones were placed within one of the old coffins and put back in association with the grave plot. To fit with the chronological sequence these actions must have happened in the later 19th century, which coincides with the creation of a plot boundary wall defining the space between adjoining grave plots and the pathway. Yet the rules concerning the clearance of graves were not adhered to, and the result was a reburial and concealment of coffin and charnel remains within an unauthorised space.



Figure 9.2: Partially-excavated coffin filled with bones of two adults. Photo: Museum of Copenhagen.

9.7 Dealing with Body Parts

Deposition of charnel bones also occurred within in situ coffins. One deposit (Group 676) was placed carefully in the foot end of another coffin but did not disturb the in situ body (Fig. 3). The unusual feature of this deposit was that it consisted of partially articulated bones: the decay processes had not broken down all the soft tissues connecting the joints together. When re-deposited it must have appeared as a body part, not a skeleton. It consisted of the lower part of an articulated spine, the pelvis and legs, with the legs folded underneath the pelvis. Yet the legs were in an anatomically correct position in respect to the joints, indicating the presence of ligaments that were present but flexible enough to create this position. This provokes an interesting discussion. Many of the joints present are described as persistent because the soft tissue connections do not break down rapidly (lumbar, lumbar-sacral joint, knee and ankle: Duday, 2009) indicating that they are likely to have been articulated for a long period after original deposition. Yet other joints in this part of the body break down rapidly. For example, in a body within a void space, such as a coffin, it is common for the femoral head to move and displace the pelvis in the early stages of the decomposition process, as there are no strong ligaments which keep it in place. Therefore for this section of abdomen and legs to stay in an articulated state suggests either rapid disinterment or some other form of containment such as clothing or a shroud. This would keep the body intact and enable movement of this part as a block into the new coffin. Eventually the cloth fully decays leaving the bones in the position found during excavation. The gravediggers are thus destroying coffins and bodies that are in some form intact and visibly recognisable as a human body, but still attempting to provide a measure of care during the processes of reburial. Although this example appears to be unique it is possible that this behaviour could have occurred in other circumstances where manipulation of recent dead bodies was necessary to create space within a grave plot. A similar point can be made concerning the implications of manipulating coffins in different stages of decay and the acts necessary to reduce them to manageable pieces of wood or metal. These points illustrate the extent of manipulation and concealment which was expected of gravediggers in their daily work which is likely to have been undertaken with little consideration by the rest of society.

9.8 The Manipulation of Intact Burials

Examination of the manipulation of remains was not focused solely on body parts; there was evidence of movement of coffins that had not yet decayed and were not broken up. Comparison of documentary and archaeological evidence suggested several cases where the stratigraphic sequence of coffins could have been swopped to create more space. Several examples are related to infant and juvenile remains which could be moved aside to make room for larger adult coffins and creating a new sequence of burials. This shows decision-making by gravediggers in reaction to the manipulation of space, and also the possibility of care for smaller, more fragile coffins to stop them being destroyed by heavier weights on top of them. There was also a single example of a burial with the coffin in an unusual position on its side and on top of another coffin (Group 959). This cannot be explained due to a lack of space available; the grave had been dug to the required width and depth and there were no other obstacles in the way. The coffin lid was not completely fixed perhaps due to subsidence caused by a previous burial or pressure from overlying soil. The body was still articulated, held together by the coffin and the presence of a large amount of wood shavings and a preserved pillow filled with feathers. These soft furnishings evidently helped to stabilise the body in one position. This is the original placement of the coffin; it had not been moved to create extra space as there were no later burials in this plot. As this is a unique example it could have been a mistake during the lowering of the coffin in the funeral which was not corrected, suggesting that there were no observers present at the funeral. However there is also evidence from the burial underneath that there was some form of grave robbery. It is suggested that the top coffin was placed on its side to gain access to the earlier and more elaborated coffin which would have been visible. The latter's coffin lid was broken, the body inside had been disturbed, and despite the elaborated decorative style on the coffin there were no finds such as coffin handles, nor personal grave finds inside the coffin. Although an absence of these decorations and grave goods do not prove robbery, combined with other factors they contribute towards such an interpretation. This example is not the only potential evidence for grave robbery on the cemetery and these cases show potential evidence about gravediggers' decision making and actions far beyond cemetery regulations. It is an example of ordering space within a grave to allow manipulation of bodies and bones.

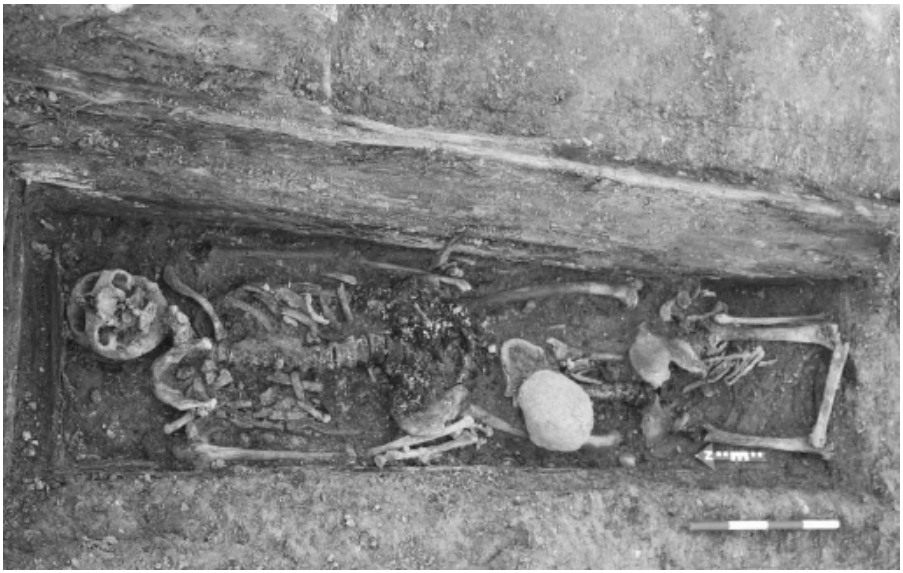


Figure 9.3: An undisturbed skeleton in a coffin covered by partially articulated charnel. Photo: Museum of Copenhagen.

9.9 Concealing Illicit Burials?

One of the explicit features of modern cemeteries is the visible above-ground control and spatial regulation of the burials. However a group of child burials found outside the allocated grave plots suggests that the ordered nature of the cemetery was not all it appeared. Within the cemetery there are specific rows of burial plots for children. Several rows were partially excavated and showed a standardised burial rite, with each plot containing one burial within a coffin. There was no intercutting of the graves, indicating a known position or visible above-ground marker, and all burials were placed at the regulation depth. However there was an exception to this norm where a cluster of six child graves were positioned around a tree (Fig. 9.4: Groups 68, 72 and 120-3). They were outside any known grave plot, and no associated documentary record has been located. Despite their unusual location they were still oriented north-south to align with the closest adjacent grave plots, which indicates a willingness on the part of the gravediggers to accord a normative set of burial practices to these graves. The burials were of infants: two were new-borns and the eldest was only approximately two years old. The coffins were made of thin wood that had mostly decayed and there were no grave goods or other evidence of burial ritual observed. All were buried just underneath the topsoil and some were intercut suggesting that they were less likely to have had above-ground markers. In fact the tree itself may have formed a private and unofficial memorial. There was clearly a need to discretely commemorate these clandestine burials and to connect them with the legitimate burials in the cemetery (Davenport & Harrison, 2011, p. 183).

The nature of these burials suggests a variation from the standard. It is possible that the loose soil around tree roots could conceal a new grave of a small child, and that this could be carried out by the gravediggers without the knowledge of the cemetery authorities or the general public. The intercutting of some graves suggests that this specific place was known about and used repeatedly. It may therefore represent some form of concealment by gravediggers of their illicit but also perhaps sympathetic actions. For the parents, they could achieve a burial of their child within a prestigious consecrated burial ground without the possible stigma of using a pauper's grave. Although not specifically relating to charnel redeposition and secondary manipulation of human bones long after original deposition, these child burials provide evidence that there were challenges to authority regulations in regard to the organisation of space and of hiding the gravediggers' actions.

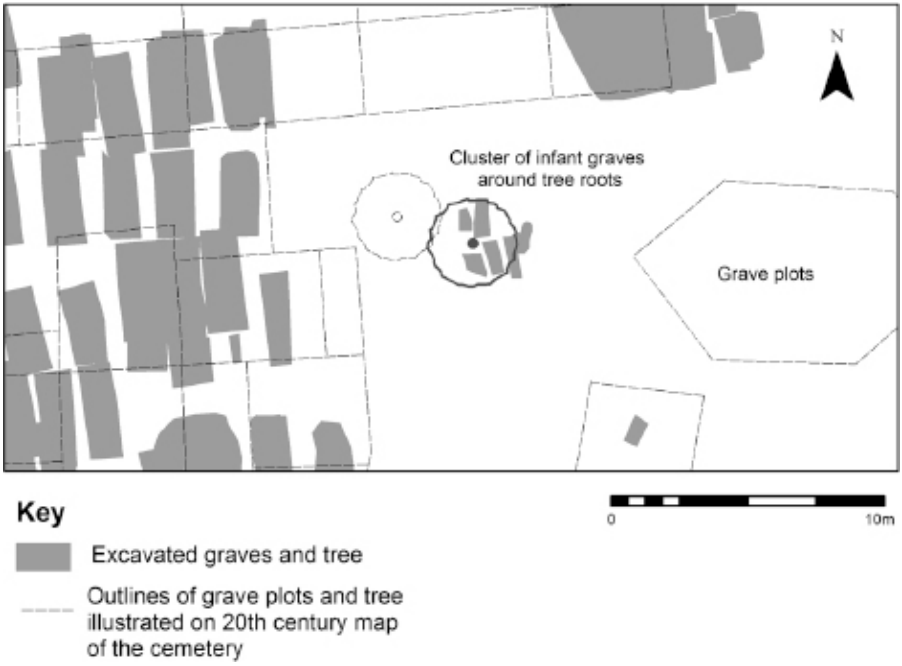


Figure 9.4: A cluster of infant burials around tree roots.

9.10 Exploring the Manipulation of Remains in Landscape Cemeteries

This investigation started with describing the perceptions created and replicated by the material environment of modern landscape cemeteries. A modern cemetery promotes a feeling of control over death through its organisation of the space and material remains above-ground. The ideas of boundaries that define society are echoed through the bounded walls of the cemetery to each defined grave plot, and the regulated behaviour suggested as appropriate for visitors and staff. The new cemeteries were intended to create a new way of managing the practices within it. The above-ground world seems ordered and organised to control death and the material remains of death but the below-ground world is a different matter with regulations not being followed, and decayed remains being truncated, moved and manipulated.

The excavation evidence lends itself to the examination of the interplay between what was believed to be happening on the cemetery and the actual practices. The question of why there was evidence of careful and deliberate re-deposition of human bone in a cemetery that is the image of order and regulation must be considered.

All the described activities are concerned with space – the need to adjust or create more space within the boundaries of a grave plot. In some instances there may be illicit behaviours, particularly involved in the possibility of grave robbing or the placement of infants outside regulated plots. But overall there was a careful and deliberate set of practices that were carried out in response to the ordered world of the designed environment. The decisions taken are about controlling and manipulating space, trying to order the below-ground in a similar manner to the world above-ground. Underneath the soil is an unseen dimension which hides the body and other funeral remains as they decay, but also conceals the practices that take place. Yet the disorder below-ground may have been necessary to maintain the modern appearance of order that could be seen. Here it is the gravediggers who are integrating above and below perspectives. The work described as taking place below-ground is out of sight from society in general; only the gravediggers knew what really had to take place to achieve this vision of control and ordering of space. These hidden actions enabled society to continue reproducing the perception of order and control in the modern cemetery.

The practices described here should not be dismissed as purely pragmatic and the result of unconscious thoughts on the part of the gravediggers: each decision required consideration of the action. These are recorded in the archaeological sequences which show that there were decisions made by gravediggers on the basis of their forms of tacit knowledge developed through working within the cemetery. They created an important set of skills and emotional ways to deal with their work and formed a significant – but often hidden – part of the processes from dealing with the initial burial to later maintenance and clearing of old burials. In Assistens Kirkegård the gravediggers had to find ways to blur the boundaries between what society expected from them in their work and the everyday reality involved in that work, hiding the body and body parts from the rest of society. The archaeological evidence shows that they achieved this by ignoring some rules, by manipulating the spatial capacity underground and by trying to find new places to put the remains – hiding them in other coffins, under other coffins or by pushing bones back into graves. The work of manipulating the remains does not necessarily imply unprofessional or unethical behaviour by the gravediggers, but can be associated with pride in their work and compassion in their treatment of the remains. Although there may be

exceptions, in general there is a sense of care and empathy in the treatment of remains within the cemetery. However in breaking up the bodies they also removed the integrity of the body as an entity and a person, which enabled them to reclassify the body as a kind of material that can be manipulated. One of the principal purposes of cemeteries is to hide the body. But this is not purely about disposal, but also removal from view of the processes subsequently occurring, and the social concealment of a once-living person.

The body, the dead person, becomes another object, one which is to be displayed for a very short time and then hidden in the ground. So much focus is towards the immediate stages around and after death resulting in the deposition of the body in a grave, but what happens afterwards in the long afterlife of a burial?

This work is done by cemetery staff and is not a part of widely-known or socially acknowledged activity within a cemetery. It is hidden or concealed behind the image of a landscape cemetery. This creates a challenge to the idea of the modern cemetery where death has now been supposedly ordered and controlled. It creates a dissonance with the orthodox views of cemeteries. Concerning the below-ground changes in Denmark, as in many European countries grave plot space has the potential to be re-used. While this may be known by some, it remains largely unspoken of by society in general. The archaeological and documentary evidence creates a challenge to an ideal static image of a cemetery. Modern and contemporary cemeteries are revealed as dynamic places where alterations are made above- and below-ground. While in the contemporary world there has been an increase in different methods of body disposal such as cremation, which immediately conceals the body through destruction, burial is still used and problems relating to the lack of space in modern cemeteries are urgent in many European countries (Hussein & Rugg, 2003). The concealed practices identified in this chapter must still occur. Perhaps it is now time for them to be brought into the open and acknowledged as necessary and important in our relationships to the dead and to those people who work with them.

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10 Burial Customs in the Northern Ostrobothnian Region (Finland) from the Late Medieval Period to the 20th Century. Plant Remains in Graves

Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of burial customs in Northern Ostrobothnia (Finland), but concentrates on the furnishing of coffins with plants. The results are based on graveyard excavations and church surveys in which the sites and studied graves date from circa 1400 to 1800AD (Tab. 10.1). Some of the features of burial customs, such as using birch bark as a cover or shroud, are common across the whole of Fennoscandia, but others are restricted to specific locales. Offerings and decorations were essential parts of the burial rituals in both pre-Christian and Russian Orthodox ceremonies. The archaeological grave excavations in Hailuoto, Ii Hamina and Manamansalo (in the interior of Northern Ostrobothnia) have produced archaeological data that give us perspectives on medieval burial customs in Northern Finland (Fig. 10.1). Analysis of pollen and macrofossil records from Late Medieval Ii Hamina has revealed evidence of offerings and decorations in the graves (Tranberg et al., 2014). Moreover, similar practices have been documented in 17th- and 18th-century Northern Ostrobothnian under-floor church burials (Alakärppä, 1997; Alakärppä & Paavola, 1997; Ojanlatva & Paavola, 1997; Sarkkinen & Kehusmaa, 2002) and even as late as the 1950s in Ii (Itkonen, 1950). Beliefs related to food offerings in the coffin can also be found in early 20th century ethnographic literature too. Some of the case studies presented in this paper are under-floor burials from different periods. Interments underneath church floors largely ended between 1750 and 1780. While the families of clergy and school authorityhad been entitled to free under-floor burial since 1719, others had to pay for such burials (Paavola, 1995, pp. 50, 114). The results from Ii Hamina, Manamansalo, Valmarinniemi and Oulu cathedral are all based on graveyard excavations (Kallio-Seppä, 2010; Sarkkinen & Kehusmaa, 2002). The aim of this chapter is to describe a possible pattern of furnishing graves and coffins in Northern Ostrobothnia. The term ‘furnishing’ in this context means the placing of different kinds of padding and covers into the graves or coffins. The term ‘offering’ refers to food or other equipment put alongside with the

deceased, whereas ‘decorations’ were only for show.

The religion of the population affected the traditions of burial practice. There were multiple ethnicities and religions present in Northern Finland during the Medieval period. Before the colonization in the 14th century the area was inhabited by Sami (the native people of Northern Fennoscandia), Tavastians (from southern

Finland) and then Karelians (from Karelia). They all adhered to different religions. Karelians represented generally the Russian Orthodox Church. Tavastians were Catholics, and the Sami had their own indigenous religion before they started to convert to Lutheranism during the 17th and 18th centuries. Population growth was at its highest in the 14th century, when people arrived from south-western coast of Finland. In addition, the area was populated by representatives of the Swedish crown and, especially from the 17th and 18th centuries, many professionals (e.g. craftsmen, traders, gardeners) from Central Europe (Vahtola, 2004). The Ostrobothnian region was under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church from the early 14th century, but all turned towards Lutheranism in the peaceful Reformation from the mid-16th century onward. Regardless of the ruling church, the Russian Orthodox Church had and has an influence on the lives of Northern Ostrobothnians, particularly in the Ii and Manamansalo areas. Religious everyday life during the medieval period was based not only on Christian beliefs, but also older pre-Christian beliefs which persisted among the people as well (Tanska, 2011, pp. 25ff; Vahtola, 1998, p. 18). Medieval spirituality did not separate reality and religion in the same way than we do today. Pre-Christian beliefs connected the sacred to concrete everyday events (e.g. Pirinen, 1996). While the burial ceremony was generally regulated, coffin furnishing was not under any regulation (see Rimpiläinen, 1971). The tradition of coffin furnishing was dictated by custom, or at the most unspoken rules.

Table 10.1: The graves from Ostrobothnian churches and graveyards studied in this chapter.

Church	Date	Graves with plants (all studied)	Research method
Oulu Cathedral	1600-1770-centuries	26(127)	Excavation/burial ground
Ii Hamina	1400-1600-centuries	5	Excavation/burial ground
Kempele	1600-1700 -centuries	4(8)	Survey/under-floor
Keminmaa	1600-1800 -centuries	11(31)	Survey/under-floor
Haukipudas	1600-1700 -centuries	4(9)	Survey/under-floor
Hailuoto	1600-1700 -centuries	33(35)	Excavation/burial ground
Manamansalo	1500 -century	0(9)	Excavation/burial ground
Valmarinniemi	1000-1450 -centuries	0(88)	Excavation/burial ground
Tornio	Late 1600-1800 -cent.	10(29)	Survey/under-floor

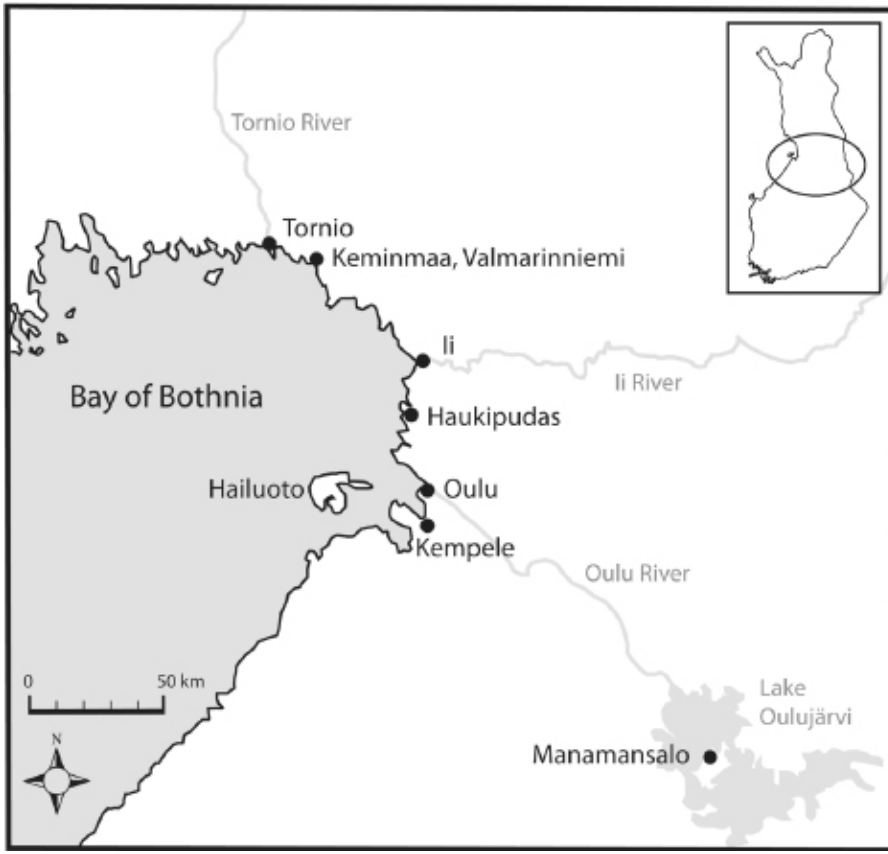


Figure 10.1: Map of Ostrobothnia and the sites.

10.1 Burial Customs at Ii Hamina

Excavations at the Ii Hamina medieval graveyard and church site were carried out during the summer of 2009 (Kallio-Seppä, 2010; Kallio-Seppä et al., 2009; Kallio-Seppä et al., 2011). Approximately nine per cent of the total graveyard area was excavated and at least 290 deceased revealed. Coin finds from graves and radiocarbon dating of the deceased indicates that the graveyard was in use from the 15th century until the early 17th century (Jylkkä-Karppinen, 2011). Soil samples were taken from five in situ graves for the analysis of pollen, insect and seed remains (Alenius 2011; Tranberg, 2011a; Tranberg, 2011b; Tranberg, 2011c). These samples were analyzed in order to investigate the possible use of plants in local burial customs. Investigation of the funeral methods was expected to reflect human relations with foodplants or the environment.

The few macro fossils from the Ii Hamina graves were unfortunately

poorly preserved and represented fairly common species in the natural vegetation. However, these fossil seeds indicate weed plants which are generally edible, but their role in a

local diet cannot be confirmed. This is the case in medieval village sites in general. One cannot always say whether fossils such as the raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*) or fat hen (*Chenopodium album*) seeds that were present in studied samples reflect food waste or local vegetation in an archaeological context (Hämet-Ahti et al., 1998; Väre et al., 2005). There is an example from southern Finland where fat hen has been used as a flour substitute. Such a custom was also discovered at Åland, where bread made from a a flour of mixed fat hen seeds and grains was found from an Iron Age grave as an offering (Lempiäinen, 2009, p. 126). The seeds of turnips (*Brassica rapa*) and raspberries in the Ii Hamina graves refer to common food plants utilized in Ii Hamina and its surroundings (Luukko, 1954, p. 182). These few seeds do not indicate the burial customs, however. The seeds could have been transported accidentally into the graves from the surroundings during the funeral ceremony.

The few fragments of birch bark in one of the graves could indicate a traditional manner of covering the deceased with birch bark. A body was wrapped up in birch bark in a burial at Hailuoto graveyard (Fig. 10.2) and dated to the 18th century (Paavola, 1995, p. 110). Another older example of such process comes from Late Iron Age southern Finland, where a body was wrapped up in bark to prevent sand flowing inside the coffin (Cleve, 1978, p. 82; Gräslund, 1980, p. 14). The same tradition was in use among Sami people; the deceased person was covered with some local material from the surroundings, such as stones, branches or moss, but then the body was usually wrapped in reindeer skin and sometimes birch bark (Itkonen, 1984). Wrapping in birch bark also seems to be characteristic of medieval Sami burial culture (Zachrisson, 1997). The use of birch bark for covering the deceased was later replaced by wooden coffins and covers, but the use of bark in some form in funeral ceremonies remains until the 19th century. The previously-mentioned study of early modern church under-floor coffins in Ostrobothnia, where the roofs of the tombs had been covered with birch bark and sand layers, reveals the popularity of this tradition well.

The pollen analysis of Ii Hamina graves gives more information on coffin furnishing or putting offerings inside the graves than macro fossil analysis. The results indicate that mainly true grasses (*Poaceae*) but also sedges (*Carex*) were used in the graves, possibly as a bedding material. The exceptionally high proportion of pollen from *Cichoriaceae* species in one of the graves indicates that these flowering plants, together with asters and bellflowers, were put into the grave during the funeral. In addition, high proportions of barley and rye pollen in another of the graves indicate food offerings.

10.2 Furnishing of the Coffins in Early Modern

Ostrobothnia – Archaeological Results

Most of our insight into coffin furnishings in the area is based on the evidence from church floor graves from Oulu (Kehusmaa, 1996; Lempiäinen, 1996), Kempele, Keminmaa, Haukipudas and Hailuoto (Fig. 10.1). The documentation used here was

produced by Kirsti Paavola and her research group during the 1990s. Surveys were undertaken without disturbing the graves (Alakärppä, 1997; Alakärppä & Paavola, 1997; Ojanlatva & Paavola, 1997; Paavola, 1991). The survey in Kempele was based on already open coffins, but in both Keminmaa and Haukipudas the coffins were opened for recording. Because some of the survey information represents only coffins which were already open, and not all coffins were opened at all, the documentation is not comprehensive but provides some glimpses of coffin furnishings from the 17th to the 19th centuries in Ostrobothnia. The results from Oulu cathedral, Manamansalo, Valmarinniemi and Ii Hamina graveyard came from excavated burials. Therefore the preservation conditions were different to those of the earlier-mentioned under-floor graves. It is not possible to make any statistically-secure insights regarding the actual coffin-furnishing methods, because of the preservation differences and the approach to sampling being less than systematic in most of the investigations. The furnishing materials taken into account here are birch bark, spruce branches, moss and grasses (reed, straw and hay).

The graveyard of Manamansalo dates to the 16th century (Laulumaa, 1994). No finds related to food offerings or furnishing inside the graves were found, but some artefacts connected to clothes, or personal belongings of the deceased were found. The excavation does reveal that people in the area were in contact with both the eastern and western churches. The medieval graveyard Valmarinniemi (at Keminmaa, situated on the northern part of the North Ostrobothnian coast) was excavated in the early 1980s (Koivunen, 1997). Unfortunately, no organic matter was found (Valmarinniemen hautakortit, 1981). In Valmarinniemi and in Manamansalo the organic materials were destroyed, whereas in Hailuoto the humidity of the ground preserved the material. The excavations of Hailuoto produced well-preserved birch bark (Fig. 10.2) probably used as a cover or shroud.



Figure 10.2: Hailuoto: a birch bark burial.

Using birch bark and spruce branches as cover or bedding was common during the 17th and 18th centuries and these materials were still in use during the 19th century in Ostrobothnia. The most common coffin furnishing material in the whole study area was birch bark (60%) followed by spruce branches (28%), and some graves had both birch and spruce remains in them. Legs and hips were more commonly covered than the whole body. In this case, the most-used material was birch bark. Spruce and birch were also used in some cases at the bottom of the coffin or beneath the head as padding. It has been reported in ethnographic records that spruce twigs prevent dead people from moving and therefore reduces their capacity to haunt the living. The use of spruce twigs as a decoration at funerals also refers to the prevention of haunting (Hagberg, 1937; Jonsson, 2009). The more common habit of covering legs and hips rather than the whole body with spruce branches (Fig. 10.3) would make sense from this point of view. To cover them with birch bark does not seem to have the same meaning. The characteristic of covering the legs with birch bark was common especially on Hailuoto island (Fig. 10.2), and could indicate the dressing of the deceased. It was more important and therefore more common to decorate and dress the head area of the deceased, rather than the rest of the body, as late as the 18th century in Oulu (Palomaa, 2012). The lower body was simply covered with clothing or something else.



Figure 10.3: Kempele: an example with legs and hips covered with spruce twigs.

Around 70% of the furnishing inside the coffins referred to cases in which birch bark had been used to cover only legs and hips. The use of birch bark most likely comes from the old custom of using bark as a

cover, shield or kind of shroud, as was described above. However, the late use of bark did not fulfil the same purposes. The

coffin was closed and the body was dressed, leaving another function for bark. Spruce branches were not necessarily only padding, but gave off an odour as well. However, the smell of the plants would not last for a very long time, and could not at any rate hide the smell of decomposition. The space underneath the church floor was used for graves or as a mortuary, and in some northern Finnish parishes this custom was an occasional practice until the 19th century (Paavola, 2009, p. 246). It is obvious that the air inside the church was, from time to time, and at least during summer, filled with a strong smell of rotten bodies. To ease their experiences during services people waved aromatic herbs such as mint (*Mentha*) in front of their faces.

The survey of underfloor burials in the church at Tornio confirmed the above-mentioned coffin furnishing methods (Suvanto, 2005). Using spruce branches as a cover or mattress was the most common, although bark, hay and straw were also used. Suvanto (2005) reported sawdust in some coffins. Using sawdust seems to be a relatively common coffin filling in Scandinavia (Jonsson, 2009): see figure 10.4 for an example from Keminmaa. Suvanto (2005) described organic litter inside the coffins as well. It is unclear if it consists of the remains of plant decoration. In any event, flower ornaments made from fabric and wire were used to decorate the interior (and sometimes the exterior) of the coffins of children. This is typical of the whole Ostrobothnia area. In fact, it seems to have been a common way of decorating coffins in the north in general. Hagberg (1937) describes funeral practices in Sweden in 19th century. She describes how it was unsuitable to put plant decoration such as spruce or lingonberry (V*accinium vitis-idaea*) branches into adults' coffins, but it was considered appropriate for children's coffins.

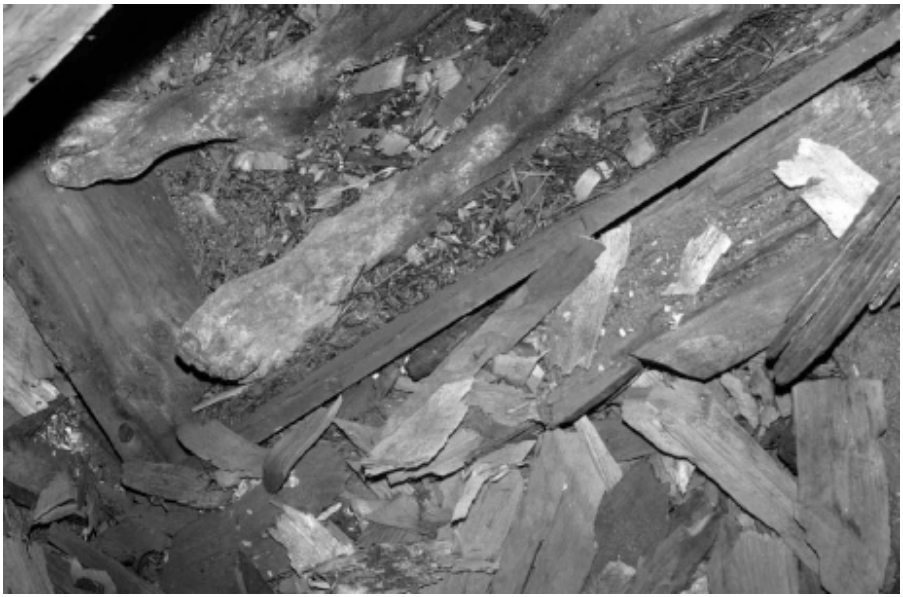


Figure 10.4: Keminmaa: sawdust inside a coffin.

Straw, grass or hay – or reed in the case of Hailuoto – were more commonly used as paddings. The use of reeds was a product of local cultural practice and environmental circumstance. Reed was an important plant for people in Hailuoto. It was a dominating feature in an areas with open sea-shore landscapes, and was used as animal food (Hicks, 1988). Local practices are not always dictated by ritualistic features. The reason why a certain plant was used as padding can simply be based on availability. It is also a fact that the mattresses of the living were usually made mainly from reeds. A similar local custom was used in medieval England. For example, at Hulton Abbey a body was wrapped up in rushes (Daniell, 1998, p. 157, citing Klemperer, 1992, pp. 87-88). It is unclear if reed in Hailuoto was used as a shroud or as padding, but birch bark was definitely used as a shroud in one of the graves.

The excavations in the graveyard of Oulu Cathedral produced most of the moss material found within the research project discussed here. Only one example could be found from the other sites, in a single grave from Haukipudas. Moss is one material that was used as padding, even though it was not as common as first thought: some of the apparent moss remains have now been demonstrated to be the remains of insects. While some observers had noted something that looked like moss inside coffins, further study showed it to be *Diptera* cocoons (Lempiäinen, 1996). In comparison, several moss species were found from graves in Katariina and Kirkonmäki (southern Finland), where *Polytrichum*, *Rhizomnium* and *Dicranum* species were used as padding in these Late Iron Age graves (Lempiäinen, 2009). Investigating Ostrobothnian early modern graves, it looks as though moss was placed underneath the bodies, constructing some kind of a mattress. Moss has not been found in the earlier Ostrobothnian graves or coffins. As a matter of fact, moss (Polytrichum) has been used as mattress among the 18th century's Sami and elsewhere among the native people of the Arctic (e.g. Linne 1991(1737), p. 105). Nevertheless, some of the moss inside the under-floor graves of Ostrobothnian churches had probably fallen from the above floor structures. The floors of the time were insulated by moss between the floor timbers

Birch bark was therefore not the only material that could be used for wrapping bodies, although it seems to have been a commonly-used material in Ostrobothnia and Finland overall. In fact, it would appear that birch bark has always had an important place in Finnish funeral customs. Throughout the area moss and hay or reed was commonly used as padding, but branches of spruce and birch bark acted as covers, bedding or pillows to produce fragrance, or even as a decorative feature. All the hay remains found were either underneath the body or around the head, indicating use as a pillow or mattress.

A bouquet made from *Ranunculus*, *Trifolium repens* and *Carex* species, was found inside a grave at Hailuoto, underneath the head. It is not clear if the bouquet was a pillow. A clear example of such decoration comes from Espoo (Southern Finland), where sprigs of blueberry, lingonberry or heather (Hiekkanen, 1988, p. 69) were used

in the same way as flowers in Ostrobothnian cases. Twigs of birch and alder (*Alnus*) were found underneath the head from one of the Oulu Cathedral graves, and twigs of birch from two graves at Hailuoto and Oulu, which date to the 17th or 18th century. We can assume that the twigs were also put inside the coffin as a decorative feature. Twigs of birch were also found inside a grave in Keminmaa (dated to the 17th to 19th centuries).

The custom of putting personal belongings or decorations inside the coffin continued in the 19th century, but there are no references to food offerings. However, this does not meant hat there were none. Despite the fact that there is no archaeological evidence of food offering in this data, the ethnographic literature includes examples of food being placed alongside the deceased as late as the early 20th century (e.g. Pentikäinen, 1990, p. 73).

10.3 Ethnographic References to Plants in Funeral Practices

Ethnographer Samuli Paulaharju (1914, p. 107) described funeral practices in Hailuoto in 1912. The shavings of the coffin were put inside the coffin alongside the dead. It has been said that they functioned as padding. It is possible that the shavings were put inside the coffin also because they had been in contact with the deceased. Everything that had been in such contact, like clothes of the dead person, hair, teeth, freshly-used tools and the material used when making the coffin, was supposed to be burned or put into the coffin. Thus finding shavings in or around the grave is not unexpected. Similarly, the ground level under the church floor is often filled with shavings from the construction of the church building. However, shavings were found inside the mattress underneath a burial in Keminmaa. This infant burial demonstrates the fact that material that had been in contact with the dead or the coffin was somehow infected by the death and had to join the deceased. In the cases, were reed was found inside the mattress, the mattress probably was the deathbed of the deceased (Hyry et al., 1995, p. 79). Reed was used for making mattresses in Ostrobothnia still in the 20th century.

Pre-Christians put offerings into the graves and flowers mainly outside the graves. When grave offerings became forbidden as Christianity took root, flowers in a way replaced them (Goody, 1993, p. 46). As house plants became more common during the 19th century in Finland and Sweden, so did live flowers placed inside the coffins. When live flowers were not available, they were replaced with artificial ones. Overall, house plants such as *Fuchsia* and *Pelargonium*, were put inside

the coffin along with herbs like Old-Man Wormwood (*Artemisia abrotanum*). Other commonly-used plants connected to funerals in the early 20th century were *Asparagus setaceous* and Asparagus densiflorus, Myrtus communis (myrtle) and Hedera. Features connecting funeral plants were fragrance and evergreenness. These features have continuity from the classical period to today, and before that strong Egyptian foundation. Myrtle was

put into young women's and children's coffins. Myrtle was not so common before the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Hagberg, 1937), when lingonberry and bearberry (*Arctostaphylos*) were in use. Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) was also sometimes put into coffins. During the 20th century plants of foreign origin and house plants were commonly used for decoration and for fragrance both inside and outside the coffin. The funeral bouquet was made, for example, from ferns or house plants which had big leaves (Arkio, 1993).

The decorative use of plants inside the coffins found archaeologically is not as common as plants used as padding. Decorative features found inside the early modern coffins were in general made from some inorganic material, even if they illustrated a particular plant, though possible decorations of organic origin could have decomposed. Hagberg (1937) wrote that such artificial flowers were more common in earlier times, by which she means the 19th century. These decorative figures were made of brass and fabric.

Cypress (*Cupressus*) had been an important plant associated with dead in antiquity. In late 19th century Finland lingonberry sprigs, cypress and cycad (*Cycas*) along with some flowering plants were used in funeral bouquets. In the Finnish tradition cypress was replaced with local conifers: spruce and pine or lingonberry sprigs. Birch twigs were a very important feature and replaced spruce during summertime when the plant was green. In Rantsila (Ostrobothnia) Butcher's-Broom (*Ruscus aculeatus*) was used in the same way in the early 20th century. There the open coffin was placed outside the house and decorated with different flowers or branches, *Hedera* or *Asparagus setaceus*. The flowers were arranged into the coffin. In the 1950s flowering plants were a part of funeral ceremonies also in Ii, where myrtle and asparagus were put into the coffin.

Funeral customs similar to those documented in Rantsila were still common in the 1970s and 1980s on the Ostrobothnian coast. The coffin was placed outside the deceased's home in the funeral ceremony. Spruce trees or branches were placed around the coffin and the yard. Birch trees and branches were used as the same way during the summertime, when birch had leaves (Fig. 10.5). As Hagberg (1937) makes clear, these customs had older roots and, in the past, a wider distribution in the area.

10.4 Conclusion

The study of grave offerings and decorations in Northern Ostrobothnia from the medieval period to the early 20th century shows that some of the customs persisted over centuries, and that there were features from various religious traditions. Notably, the use of birch bark in burials as a

cover or a shroud has been a continuous feature from the Iron Age to early modern times in Finland. It is a shared feature in the whole northern European area, but is especially strongly connected to the Sami culture and the native people of the Arctic. As a diverse and well-used raw material, birch bark has also earned a central role in northern culture including those aspects to do with death. Birch bark has been used as insulation in many structural solutions throughout the early modern time towns of Sweden. Burials and tombs were insulated by birch bark too. Another defining feature in burial tradition is variation ruled by practicality in the furnishing of coffins within Ostrobothnia. People used to furnish coffins with local natural products, such as moss or reeds in the case of Hailuoto, which were readily available. The reed mattress was used by living, dying and dead, the sleeper of the eternal sleep.



Figure 10.5: Birch branches and trees around a coffin (Tornio, 1980).

From the late 20th century food was not placed into coffins any more, as far as is currently known. The practice was more common in the early 20th century in agricultural communities, where the dead were sometimes provided with bread to ensure the continuation of the living (e.g. Paulaharju, 1914, p. 107; Lehikoinen 2011, p. 244). As people focused more and more on the funeral ceremony itself, offerings became less common. People started to believe in an afterlife where the dead did not need any offerings. The pre-Christian customs and beliefs started to lose their power. Decoration, especially as a manifestation of one's status or prosperity, became more central than any other aspect. The focus was on the structure of

funerals, not on the life after. Improving the deceased's hereafter was possible in the earlier Catholic ceremony, but not in the Lutheran rite anymore. Importantly, the status of the relatives of the deceased appears in the funeral ceremony. As the standard of living rose during the 19th and 20th centuries, the display of decorative aspects such as flowering plants in gardens and homes increased, and decorating coffins with them also became more popular. The same plants which ornamented people's homes were put into coffins, or most generally on top of the grave or coffin during the ceremony.

People value their physical surroundings by conferring them with spiritual meaning. For example plants important to individuals or communities are linked with myths, customs or traditions. It is natural that plants essential in life were also important in burial customs. These customs are formed by our personal attitude toward the deceased, ourselves and our surroundings, not totally by any legal institution. Nevertheless, the availability of furnishing materials and therefore practicality shapes burial traditions strongly too.

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Gabriela Blažková, Martin Omelka and Otakara Řebounová

11 Death and Burial in Post-medieval Prague

Introduction

The aim of this study is to present the results of archaeological excavations of modern-period cemeteries in the territory of the Czech Republic. It should first be pointed out that the tradition of archaeological excavations of modern-period cemeteries in Bohemia began in the 1950s as part of excavations focused on the High Middle Ages. Nevertheless, the excavation of later burial horizons was of marginal interest in Czech archaeology until the 1990s; later burial horizons (i.e. from the 17th century) were recorded only in basic features, and the first intentionally documented modern-period find contexts were not available until after 1990. More than 30 excavations of modern-period cemeteries have been published from the sites investigated in the Czech Republic thus far. The vast majority of these are Catholic cemeteries with burials of the laity and to a lesser extent members of the clergy.

In Czech archaeology, the excavations have raised many questions related to the occurrence of grave furnishings, which are virtually absent in medieval and Renaissance burials in the country. First, it was necessary to define the significance of grave furnishings for the study of the religious beliefs in Bohemia and Moravia at the time. What can be regarded as standard grave furnishings in Bohemia in the 17th and 18th centuries? How do the discovered grave furnishings correspond to the social status and demographic structure of the deceased? And finally, what parallels, dissimilarities and traits do Czech find assemblages and contexts reveal in comparison to the results of similar excavations in Europe? This chapter will address these questions.

11.1 The Burial Rite in Baroque Bohemia

Burial rites in Bohemia during the Early Modern period are closely tied to customs and rituals in the other central European regions. Characteristic of the territory of the Czech state is the fact that the formerly religiously disparate population, still composed mainly of non-Catholics at the beginning of the 17th century, was almost completely re-

Catholicized following the signing of the international peace treaty at the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648. The ruling Habsburgs gained the opportunity to assert the Catholic faith in their lands (although exceptions existed) and therefore once the Thirty Years' War ended, part of the Protestant population left Bohemia, often forfeiting most of their personal property in the process. Many of the people

who could not, or did not want to, leave the land were subsequently forced to adopt the Catholic faith – a change that was, however, often only formal.

An important part of practising the Catholic faith was the consistent application of the relevant Catholic burial rite, which can partially be studied also from the grave inventories of archaeologically researched modern-period burial grounds. The deathbed ritual and funeral were firmly defined Catholic rituals that had been codified by the Council of Trent in the year 1563 and in the norms issued by the Roman Curia and the regional church administration. For Bohemia this primarily meant the regulations established by the Prague Synod of 1605, the Roman Ritual of 1614, the Prague Ritual originally issued in 1642 and the text of the regulation by the Prague Synod on the sacraments issued in 1684 and 1762[1] for the needs of the Bohemian clergy. Additional important sources for studying the development of the local burial rite include catechisms published by the Prague Archdiocese, the missals of local orders, normative manuals such as *Ars Moriendi* ('The Art of Dying') and the testaments of the deceased. During the course of the 18th century the funeral rite was also governed by legal norms (laws issued by Empress Maria Theresa and Emperor Joseph II).

On the basis of the aforementioned sources it is known that, due to its eschatological element, the deathbed ritual belonged among the most important moments in the life of Catholics. The rite included two types of sacraments – Extreme Unction and the Holy Eucharist. The practice of the first of these sacraments can also be documented in archaeological sources. The actual funeral was composed of three basic parts between the 16th and 18th centuries. The first part involved the transfer of the deceased from the home to the church, the second was the Mass for the deceased, and the third burial in the grave. Up until the legal regulations issued by Joseph II (Emperor Joseph II's decree, 23 August 1784 and 2 September 1784), the length of funeral preparations was limited by only two circumstances – the wealth of the funeral organiser and concerns of a mundane nature: death outside the actual parish, or waiting for the preparation of the coffin, tomb, etc. The burial of Prague townspeople in the middle to higher classes of society typically lasted one to three days. Orders by Emperor Joseph II shortened the period for burying the deceased to twenty-four hours. Unfortunately, there is no way to prove the length of the burial rite archeologically; therefore we are dependent on written sources as amendments to laws, parish registers,and personal testaments.

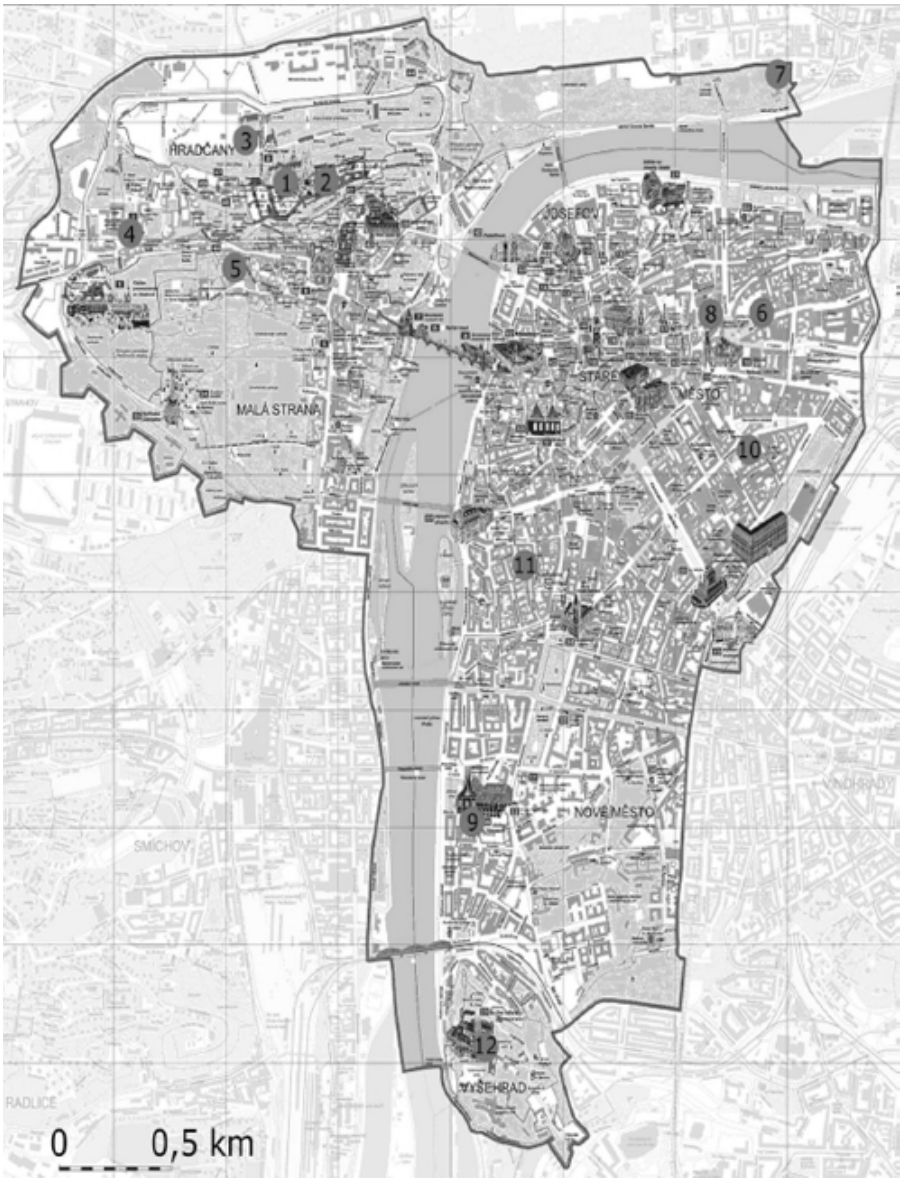


Figure 11.1: Map of Prague showing sites of archaeologically-excavated modern period cemeteries. 1. St Vitus Cathedral, Prague Castle 2. The Basilica of St George, Prague Castle 3. The Prague Castle Riding School 4. The Loreto Square, Prague Castle 5. Šporkova Street, Prague's Lesser Town Quarter 6. The Republic Square, Prague's New Town Quarter 7. The Church of St Clement, Prague-Bubny 8. The Church of St Benedict, Prague's New Town Quarter 9. Trojická Street, Prague's New Town Quarter 10. The Church of St Henry, Prague's New Town Quarter 11. V jirchářích Street, Prague's New Town Quarter 12. The Church of St Peter and Paul, Prague-Vyšehrad.

11.2 Modern Period Cemeteries in Bohemia[2]

The archaeological study of modern-period cemeteries, the modern burial rite and objects from the funeral appurtenances of this period is in its early stages in the Czech Republic[3]. The greatest number of published early modern and modern cemeteries in the territory of today's Czech Republic are located in Prague (Fig. 11.1); as a result, they form the primary source for this work.

Beginning in the 1950s, archaeological excavations in Prague were primarily conducted in the centre of the city, specifically at the cemetery of the Capuchin St Joseph Monastery at the George of Poděbrady barracks on Náměstí Republiky (from the mid-17th century to the 18th century)[4]; the excavation at the Church of St Clement in Prague-Bubny (19th-century horizon)[5]; the archaeological rescue excavation at the Prague Commandery of the Teutonic Knights and the former Romanesque

Church of St Benedict in Prague's New Town (14th to 18th century)[6]; the excavation in Prague's Trojická St (first half of the 18th century)[7]; the former cemetery on the grounds of the Church of St Henry in the New Town[8] (14th to 16th century); and the excavation at the V Jirchářích site (second half of the 18th century)[9].

The early modern and modern cemeteries that have been processed in the most detailed manner and published are those from Prague Castle and its immediate surroundings – Hradčany (11th to 18th century)[10] and the Lesser Town (see below).

11.3 Prague Castle and the Church of St John the Baptist

The work by Ivan Borkovský addresses the archaeological excavation at St George's Basilica and the Monastery at Prague Castle in 1959-1963 (Borkovský, 1975). Although the main focus of the publication is early medieval burials of the members of the Přemyslid dynasty, significant attention is also paid to the burials of abbesses and Order members. In the case of the abbesses, lead plaques are often available for determining the name of the deceased and, often, the year of death. This information indicates that the burials occurred from the Late Gothic period up to the Josephinian reforms in the 1780s. Burials of administrators, Order sisters and several most probably lay individuals can be dated to the broader period between the 16th and the 18th centuries. Nevertheless, due to research advances the authors of this text are currently reviewing the relevant assemblage of finds.

A rescue archaeological excavation was conducted in 2002 and 2004 at Šporkova Street 322/III, in the immediate vicinity of the former Church of St John the Baptist in Obora in the Lesser Town of Prague. As part of the rescue excavation, a total of 906 burials, or parts thereof, were documented and subsequently removed from the ground. General information from the excavation is available in the journal *Staletá Praha* (Omelka, 2009). A large assemblage of finds, mainly from the Modern Period, was retrieved from the grave units or their fill. Detailed inventories of these artefacts are presented in the related studies (Omelka 2006; Omelka & Řebounová, 2008; Omelka & Řebounová, 2011; Omelka & Řebounová, 2012a; Omelka & Řebounová, 2012b; Omelka, Řebounová & Šlancarová, 2009b; Omelka, Řebounová & Šlancarová, 2010; Omelka, Řebounová & Šlancarová, 2011; Omelka & Šlancarová, 2007). The cemetery was used

at least from the 13th century to the 18th century. All of the discovered skeletons were spatialy measured, professionally removed and subsequently subjected to basic anthropological analysis. This was followed by a detailed archive review of the death records of the relevant parish, with a focus on evaluating personal and demographic data.

11.4 Analysis of the Grave Goods

More than 3,000 items were found during the excavation of St George's Basilica, and more than 6,000 in the excavation in Šporkova Street. The vast majority of finds belonged to the inventories of the deceased. An analysis revealed that a common trait of both find assemblages is the presence of artefacts of a religious nature connected with both the spiritual life of the deceased and the burial rite. In addition to their geographical proximity (the sites are located near to one another: the basilica is situated in the grounds of Prague Castle, and the Church of St John the Baptist in Obora was located below the castle in the Lesser Town Quarter), the two find assemblages had a nearly identical upper limit for determining the dates of the finds. Burials were performed in St George's Basilica up to Emperor Joseph II's decree issued in 1781 and 1782 banning burials inside settlements, churches and tombs. The *datum ante quem* for determining the relative chronology of finds from the burials at the Church of St John the Baptist in Obora is 1784, i.e. the year that the cemetery was abolished by the emperor's decree. Both assemblages contain artefacts from the 17th and 18th centuries. Graves in the basilica can be dated with certainty from the beginning of the 17th century up to the 1880s, thanks to the absolute dates of burials preserved on the epigraphs on coffins and tombs. Although such dating resources were unavailable for the burials in Šporkova Street, it was possible on the basis of grave inventories, stratigraphic relationships and written sources (death records) to establish that the vast majority of the deceased were buried in the second and third thirty-year periods of the 18th century.

The differences between the sites can be followed in the social and religious environments. The cemetery at the Church of St John the Baptist in Obora represents a burial place for townspeople in which the burial practices of the common Prague urban society of the 17th and 18th centuries are reflected (Fig. 11.2). Written sources indicate that the cemetery was used to bury common citizens of the Lesser Town (Prague Archives, Collection of Parish and Civil Registers, sign. MIK i8, MIK Z3, MIK Z4, MIK Z5), and this was proved archaeologically. From the perspective of social structure, death records indicate that the vast majority of the individuals buried in the cemetery at the Church of St

John the Baptist in Obora were members of the middle or lower-middle class, typically craftsmen, merchants, public officials, landlords, the destitute aristocracy, servants, university students, soldiers and the local clergy. The lowest and highest classes of society were only marginally represented. With regard

to nationality, aside from Bohemians, the majority of other buried individuals were Germans, Italians and even Dutch. Foreigners were primarily merchants and highly-qualified professionals in construction and architecture, sculpture and painting. The most prominent members of the Italian contingency were the architect Jan Santini Aichel (1677–1723), whose works included the church at Zelená Hora, and the architect Anselmo Lurago (1702–1765). Dutch nationals buried in the cemetery include Aegidius Sadeler (1570–1629), the author of a map of Bohemia from 1605, and Bartholomeus Spranger (1546–1611), a Mannerist painter with an Italian orientation who moved to Prague in 1580 (Omelka, 2002, p. 101). From a religious perspective, the cemetery belonged to a parish administered by the Jesuits since the beginning of the 17th century.

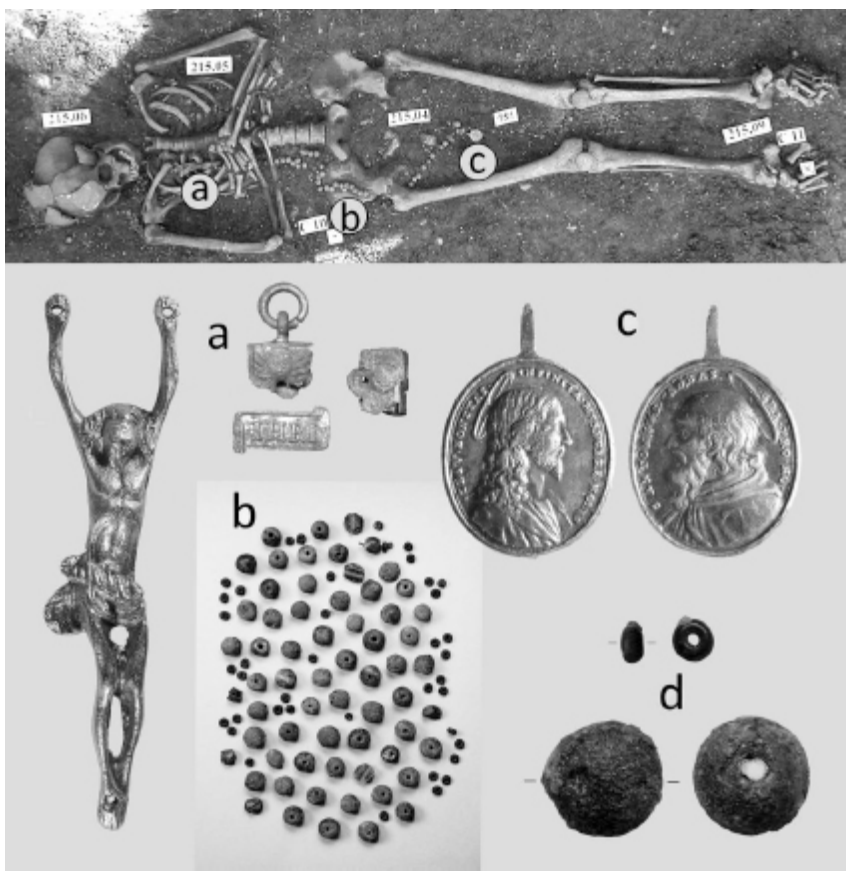


Figure 11.2: Burial 181 from Šporkova Street in Prague with furnishings. Preserved items of the grave furnishing of a 30-40 year old woman consist of (a) the metal fittings of a wooden crucifix, which was placed into the palms of the deceased; (b) rosary beads originally bound around the hands of the deceased; (c) a brass rosary medal; and (d) a sample of rosary bead types found in this grave. This composition and type of items is a typical example of grave furnishing of Prague's Lesser Town inhabitants,

buried in the cemetery of St John in Obora during the 18th century.

On the other hand, St George's Basilica on the grounds of Prague Castle primarily reflects the burial customs of a narrow range of people connected with the operation of the convent, and the nobility (Fig. 11.3). The basilica, which had functioned in the Early Middle Ages as a burial place for the ruling Přemyslid dynasty, was used in the modern period especially for burying members of the Benedictine convent, which was in operation at the site almost continuously from the tenth century to the 1880s. The excavated graves belonged to monastery abbesses, Order sisters,[11] church administrators, higher-ranking servants, monastery officials and benefactors, both noble and civic. Lower-ranking servants, residents of Prague Castle that were local parishioners and the vast majority of children were buried in the cemetery situated along the south wall of the church. The unusually large amount of objects retrieved from both excavations has provided insight into the composition of the grave furnishings of Prague Modern Period citizens and the Order community, the morphology of individual artefacts and their development, and the spiritual dimension of death and the religious notions of the buried individuals. Making a sizeable contribution to this understanding at both locations was a comparison of the discovered material with the testimony of period written and iconographic sources.

11.5 Typology of Grave Goods

Baroque burials in Bohemia are characterised by the presence of relatively rich grave furnishings. The most distinct component of the Catholic funeral in this period was the use of the cross (crucifix), various types of rosaries and prayer beads typically decorated with a broad range of small crucifix pendants, religious medals, reliquaries and prayer books.

Small crucifixes had been in use in the Catholic environment since the Middle Ages for various liturgical ceremonies, both inside and outside churches. They were carried as processional crosses, and they appeared in households in the form of home altars, table reliquaries or table crucifixes without relics, the purpose of which was the same as icons. The custom of hanging a cross with the crucified Christ on the walls of rooms spread in the 18th century. Crucifixes played an important role in rituals connected with death and the funeral rite, a context in which the cross was linked with the granting of general absolution. General absolution (the general Apostolic Blessing of the dying) is a blessing with plenary indulgences granted by the Pope or a priest authorised by the Pope to all seriously ill members of the Catholic faith that can be granted absolution and Extreme Unction (Kaiser, 1965,

pp. 321–322). Absolution became an official part of the Catholic funeral ceremony with the issue of the Roman Ritual (*Rituale romanum*) of 1614. The codification of this ritual in Prague is assumed to have occurred at the latest by 1642, the year the Prague Ritual (*Rituale pragense*) was issued. During the Baroque period the blessing and plenary indulgences were often connected with the cross (often the crucifix) that was placed in the grave with the deceased. The deceased usually held the cross in their hands, which were placed on the chest or abdomen (Korený, Omelka & Řebounová, 2012, p. 270). A total of 140 various crosses in this position was found in Šporkova Street, while 46 finds of this type were made at St George's Basilica. The majority of the crosses were wooden crucifixes with a metal (typically brass) figure of Christ and other metal parts applied to the cross.

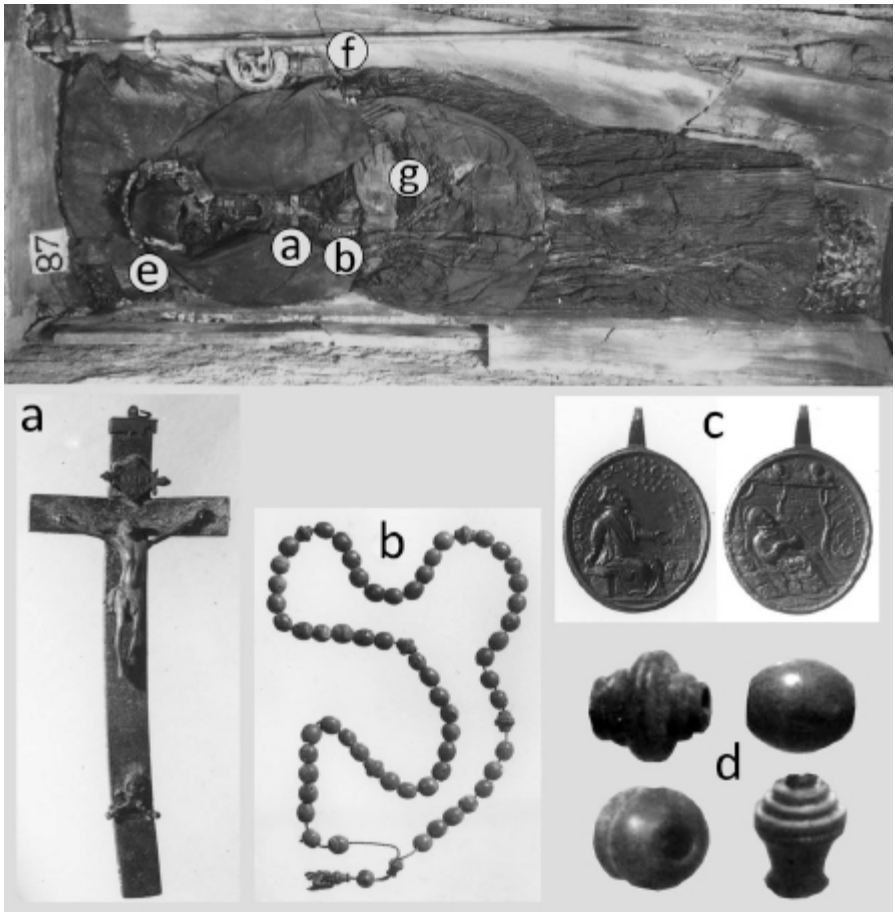


Figure 11.3: The grave of the abbess Aloisie Terezie von Widmann (†1735),St. George's Basilica. The abbess was buried in a wooden coffin in a brick burial chamber inside the church. The wooden crucifix (a) and a rosary (b) with a religious medal (c) approximately correspond with items placed into burgher and aristocratic graves in Bohemian milieu. A sample of rosary beads types found in this grave is also shown (d). Abbesses' graves differ from burgher graves and graves of common order sisters with the presence of an abbess's crown (e), and staff (f).

Rosaries also played an important role in the burial ritual. Rosaries were personal belongings owned by a person for their entire life; these were then buried with their owners when they passed away. A rosary was composed of two types of beads: 'Our Father' and 'Hail Mary' beads. Beads were among the most common finds at both sites: more than 5,000 were found in Šporkova Street, and more than 2,000 at St George's Basilica. A wide range of forms and materials were documented at the two sites, including beads of glass, wood, bone, precious stones and metals (on the form and types of Baroque rosaries in greater detail see Omelka & Řebounová, 2008, pp. 606–610). Like pendants, rosaries could also be granted by Church indulgences. Various types of pendants were attached to rosaries; one important group was composed of small crosses which could be worn as a personal ornament, as part of a scapular, as a container for relics or as part of a rosary. More than 20 small crosses of this type come from burials in St George's Basilica; 95 were found in Šporkova Street. They are usually connected to rosaries in two ways. One was as a 'Credo Cross', i.e. a cross symbolising the start of the rosary, the Apostles' Creed; in this case the small cross was hung at the beginning of the rosary strand. In the other case, the small cross was attached as a common apotropaic charm anywhere along the rosary. In terms of form, in addition to Greek crosses, which appear rather sporadically, the vast majority are Latin, two-bar and clover crosses. Some of the crosses were specific types (Fassbinder, 2003, pp. 248–249; Omelka, Řebounová & Šlancarová, 2010, pp. 467–520), which were often connected to a particular pilgrimage site, event or saint, and were distinguished more or less by a given symbolism or reference to miraculous effect. These 'special' crosses often differ from common Latin crosses, which typically feature an attached or relief figure of Christ, by an uncommon shape. Examples of this type of pendant are the 'Scheyern Cross' in the form of a two-bar cross with an expanded base, or the Cross of Caravaca – a two-bar cross with thistle-like ends. Both types were represented in the assemblage of finds from Šporkova Street, whereas only the Cross of Caravaca type was documented in St. George's Basilica. Other types of cross pendants represented in both assemblages were a Benedict pfennig in the shape of a cross, and the Jerusalem Cross. The most commonly used material for the production of pendants at both sites was brass; casting was the predominant production technology.

Another group of devotionals appearing in large numbers in the funeral contexts at both of the studied sites was religious medals, 46 of which were found during the excavation of St George's Basilica, and 248 in Šporkova Street. The objects were typically small round or oval medals (or small plaques with intricate shapes) made of various materials (metal, wood, glass, bone, clay, enamel, wax, textile or paper).

The most frequently preserved specimens are solid metal forms usually of cast brass, tin, bronze, in rare cases of silver or alloy, with a relief motif on one side, though in most cases on both. The vast majority of sacred objects found at both excavated sites were solid metal medals. Hanging these small medals on prayer beads or rosaries

was highly popular in the Baroque period. Considering the fact that rosaries in this period were not only a common part of the death ritual but, as the large number of remnants discovered in archaeological excavations indicates (Omelka & Řebounová, 2008, pp. 605–679), a fully obligatory component of the grave inventory, the role of the majority of these medals in the context of Baroque graves appears self-apparent. Nearly all the medals found at the sites were pendants on rosaries. Medals in graves likewise appear as parts of scapulars, reliquaries or in a position suggesting that they were worn around the neck.

Religious medals can be divided into a number of groups based on the reason for their production. The most important ones are pilgrimage medals depicting adoration sculptures from Bohemian (Svatá Hora near Příbram, Stará Boleslav) as well as Austrian (Mariazell) and German (Neukirchen) pilgrimage sites, symbols of a religious Order (primarily Jesuit), and commemorative motifs, the emblems of religious brotherhoods and protective medals. These latter medals can be further divided into those with a special protective effect (specimens with symbols against the plague or bad weather) and those with a general protective influence. This subgroup includes, for example, medals depicting Jesus and the Virgin Mary, as well as those for which a special effect expires after a certain amount of time (Benedict pfennigs). The wealth of depicted motifs is partly based on the diversity of function (Omelka, Řebounová & Šlancarová, 2009a, p. 592).

Funeral crowns or chaplets (in Latin *corona mortis* or *corona funebris*; in German *Totenkronen*, *Totenkränze*) are a common find discovered primarily in the grave inventories of Order sisters from St George's Basilica. Existing knowledge suggests that funeral crowns and chaplets were mainly placed in the graves of children and single individuals of both genders. Although the individuals were mainly young, burials of older and even old people also contained crowns and chaplets. The main criterion was the 'maidenliness' of the deceased, a quality that was venerated by this ornament. In certain German territories the chaplet or crown was also used to honour women in the *puerperium* (post-natal) period for their suffering (Lippok, 2009, pp. 80–81). Like age, religious affiliation was also not decisive in this burial ritual: Prague excavations indicate that the custom was widespread among both Protestants and Catholics. The remains of funeral crowns or wreaths were also found in Catholic churchyards in some others Czech sites, as Rakovník (Central Bohemia), Kralovice (Western Bohemia) or České Budějovice (Southern Bohemia).

Eight nearly complete graves of abbesses from the years 1600-1766 were documented in St George's Basilica. The inventories of these graves typically contained an insignia of the standing of the abbesses (usually a

gold-plated wooden crown, a crosier, a ring and gloves). Like the burials of regular Order sisters, those of abbesses contained rosaries (of ivory, jet stone, glass and wood) commonly furnished with brass pendants, wooden crosses with applied metal figures (held in the hands of the deceased), prayer books, scapulars, reliquaries and remnants of the aforementioned

chaplets. The burial of Aloisie Terezie von Widmann from 1735 is exemplary of the inventory of Prague abbesses (Figs. 11.3 and 11.4). The abbesses were buried in a supine position with hands folded across their abdomen or, more commonly, on the chest.



Figure 11.4: A portrait of the abbess Aloisie Terezie von Widmann (1732-1735).

11.6 Burial Customs in Bohemia after the Thirty Years' War: A Summary

The archaeological excavations conducted thus far at modern-period cemeteries in Prague indicate that, with only strictly defined exceptions, the liturgical acts required by the Catholic faith were closely observed in the territory of today's Czech Republic during the 17th and 18th centuries. The religiously disparate population, still composed mainly of

non-Catholics at the beginning of the 17th century, was

almost completely re-Catholicized following the Westphalian Peace in 1648. The practice of the Catholic liturgy by the population was then regularly monitored by the relevant Church officials, with one form of control being the funeral rite. People (and their families) who did not respect the prescribed religious practices could face existential problems. The majority of the population tried to avoid this problem by at least formally respecting the rules. This situation is reflected in grave inventories that are sometimes overly lavish; the composition and style of such inventories appear to be the same in the burials of townspeople, nobles and Church dignitaries.

It is therefore possible to state that burial furnishings in the 17th and 18th centuries in Bohemia and Moravia document the official inclination of the Bohemian and Moravian environments toward the practice of Catholicism, a faith that placed a strong emphasis on the visual presentation of the rite. The buried artefacts reflect the social necessity of conducting burials according to the Catholic burial rite required by state and church authorities. At the same time, the artefacts also express personal piety; some of the devotionals were in fact endowed with special indulgences that the Catholic faithful believed would shorten the anticipated period the deceased must spend in purgatory. The desire to shorten the suffering of the soul in purgatory held an important place in the thinking of Baroque people. It can be generally assumed that every grave in the Czech Republic from the Baroque period contained grave furnishings. The most distinct component of the Catholic burial in the local environment in this period was the use of the cross (crucifix), various types of rosaries and prayer beads typically decorated with a broad range of small crucifix pendants and religious medals, as well as reliquaries and prayer books.

The excavations conducted at St George's Basilica and at the original cemetery at the defunct Church of St John the Baptist in Obora in Šporkova Street in Prague rank among the most representative researches of modern-period cemeteries in Bohemia. St George's Basilica is significant primarily in that it served as a burial site not only for the Bohemian rulers and aristocracy but also as a cemetery for townspeople and, above all, for members of the Benedictine Order.

The revealed standard grave furnishings of burgher and church burials in Prague consisted of one crucifix held in the hands of the deceased, and one rosary, often accompanied by at least one medal, that could be also held in the hand of the deceased or could be wrapped around his hands. Pendants and crucifixes held in the hands were most commonly made of brass, while organic materials – wood and bone – were mainly used for rosary beads. In certain cases, cross pendants and medals are relatively sensitive chronological materials (commemorative medals issued on special occasions). The wealth of grave furnishings is

not determined by the number of artefacts but rather by the type of the material and the actual craftsmanship. Due to the fact that the number of discovered artefacts made of durable materials does not match the number of excavated burials, it can be assumed that the majority of burgher graves contained standard grave furnishings made of organic materials, most commonly wood. The preservation of wooden artefacts depends on soil conditions,

which are not always ideal in the country. The graves of wealthier members of society and higher ranking abbesses are furnished with artefacts of finer craftsmanship made of durable materials – again mostly of brass. Coffins were mostly very badly preserved everywhere, with no surviving decorative elements.

The custom of depositing burial chaplets was widespread in both the Church and lay environment, as excavations in Šporkova and Trojická streets document. The graves of townspeople also commonly contain personal items of the deceased (jewellery – especially rings, earrings and pince-nez) and health aids (pressure bandages). Burials of Order sisters documented in the Church environment at Prague Castle contain insignias of the Church dignitaries, i.e. crosiers, gloves and crowns.

The cemetery at the Church of St John the Baptist in Šporkova Street served as the final resting place for local settlers of the Lesser Town. In terms of archaeology, this research involved the most in-depth processing of a modern-period burial inventory and analysis of the social structure of the deceased in the Czech Republic. Together with the greatest number of modern-period graves explored using modern archaeological methods, this site has produced the highest degree of knowledge of burial customs employed by Baroque townspeople.

The essential congruity of grave furnishings in burials of members of the monastery community from Prague Castle and burghers buried at the Church of St John the Baptist in the Lesser Town documents the difficulty in socially classifying Baroque residents solely on the basis of grave goods. A thorough comparison of written sources (such as burial registers) and archaeological finds in the future could help clarify notions of which grave furnishings can be archaeologically documented and, on the other hand, which part of the source inventory will always remain the domain of written sources. Based on the processing of Bohemian and Moravian excavations, it can be stated that the composition of grave furnishings and the type, material and craftsmanship of discovered artefacts do not differ significantly from similar finds known from Catholic cemeteries dating to the 17th and 18th centuries from south Germany, Austria and Poland. Together they testify to a high degree of unification of the Catholic burial rite within Central Europe.

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1 Synodus Archi-Dioecesana Pragensis. Habita ab Illustrissimo & Reverendissimo Domino Domino Sbigneo Berka, Dei [et] Apostol. Sedis Gratia Archi-Episcopo Pragensi, & Principe Legato Nato, & c. Anno a Christi Nativitate M.D.C.V. In Festo S. Wenceslai Principis Martyris Ac Patroni.

2 Archaeological research in Bohemia defines the Early Modern period as the period from the end of the 15th to the middle of the 17th century. The period between 1650 and 1800 is designated as the Modern period. Czech historical research also divides the Modern period into two stages: the term "Early Modern period" is used for the period of 1500-1650, "Modern period" for the period of 1650-1790/1800 (Petráň a kol., 1995, p. 31). The beginning of the Early Modern period overlaps somewhat with the emergence of the Renaissance (Bůžek, Král & Vybíral, 2007, p. 44).

3 The earliest comprehensive work, which attempted to define several generalised conclusions on the basis of archaeological material from Moravia and Silesia, was published by Unger (Unger, 2000). He continued that work with a study summarising the issue of the burial rite in the Middle Ages and the Modern period (Unger, 2002). Blažková (Blažková-Dubská, 2005a) released an overview of published and unpublished Early Modern and Modern period cemeteries in Bohemia in 2004. Krajíc (2007) compiled a work describing the processing of Modern period grave finds from the south Bohemian region. Works by collectives of authors (Omelka, Řebounová & Šlancarová, 2009a; Omelka & Řebounová, 2011) were among studies that analysed the composition of grave inventories and the significance of Catholic symbolism in devotional items from grave contexts in Baroque Bohemia and Moravia.

4 The archaeological excavation at the George of Poděbrady barracks on Náměstí Republiky (Republic Square) in Prague was conducted in 2004, during which the cemetery at the Capuchin St Joseph Monastery was also researched (Flek et al., 2009a; Jurina et al., 2007). The cemetery horizon was composed of two stratigraphic layers of graves with a total of 18 grave units. Objects of a personal or other nature were found in nine graves. All 18 skeletons were subjected to an anthropological analysis and, in addition to the gender of the individuals, several diseases were also identified. The cemetery was used to bury members of the monastery community. The cemetery may

have been used for monastic brothers as well as lay servants and patients at the monastery hospital. The relative chronology of the cemetery is therefore defined by the period of the existence of the Capuchin monastery between the years 1633 and 1795 (Flek et al., 2009b).

5 An advance archaeological excavation, conducted in 1997 at the Church of St Clement in Prague-Bubny, captured part of a modern period cemetery. A total of 63 grave pits were uncovered. Solid remains of coffins and their hardware, the personal items of the deceased, human remains and parts of clothes and shoes were found in the graves. Clear traces of medical autopsies were found on several skeletal remains. The find contexts place the graves in the final phase of the cemetery, i.e. to the course of the 19th century, in one case to the end of the 18th century (Kostka & Šmolíková, 1998).

6 In 1971, the then Prague Centre of Monument Care and the Anthropology Department of the National Museum conducted a rescue archaeological excavation at sites of the Prague Commandery of the Teutonic Knights and the former Romanesque Church of St Benedict in the New Town quarter of Prague. Only a small number of graves has survived intact from the original cemetery, where the number of graves was estimated in the thousands. During the excavation samples were taken from a total of 850 graves, which were divided into five chronological phases on the basis of their stratigraphy (Jeˇcný & Omlerová, 1988, p. 8). From the perspective of modern-period burials, the two latest phases of burials – the fourth and the fifth – are significant. The fourth phase lasted approximately between 1380 and 1635. It is probable that only part of the cemetery (represented by 160 skeletons) from this phase of burial was identified (Hanáková & Stloukal, 1988, p. 159). The fifth phase of burial lasted approximately 150 years, at which point the church and the adjacent buildings were owned by the Strahov Premonstratensians. Bones from graves disturbed by a Baroque building were deposited in the cellar of a newly constructed charnel house on the north side of the church along the wall of the cemetery. The compacted layer of bones (nearly 30cm deep) contained the remains of several hundred individuals. Preserved next to the spacious crypt located beneath the chancel of the seminary church were several masonry tombs filled with wooden coffins. Intensive burials also continued outside the church in this period. A specific terrain situation was captured by the excavation in front of the west facade of the Baroque church, where disrespectfully-buried skeletons were found laid across one another in irregular groups in the waste fill. This was apparently a plague cemetery from the year 1680, during which more than 16,000 people died in Prague. The graves on the remaining land explored in front of the west facade of the church were arranged in rows and formed part of the cemetery that surrounded the Baroque church for the entire following century. This phase of burial contains 462 skeletons (Jeˇcný & Olmerová, 1988, p. 22).

7 The find of a mass grave with dozens of skeletons in a 1.3-meter thick layer in the year 1969 in Trojická Street in Prague was dated to the first half of the 18th century (Beranová, 1989, p. 273). Brass sacred objects depicting St John of Nepomuk, and remnants of funeral chaplets in the form of silver, copper and brass wires were found in the grave fill.

8 A site with modern-period burials that has been studied for a longer period of time is the former cemetery on the grounds of the Church of St Henry in Prague's New Town Quarter, which was used primarily between the 14th and 16th centuries (Dobisíková et al., 1997; Hanáková, Martinec & Vyhnánek, 1975; Omelka & Starec, 2002).

9 During the large-scale reconstruction of the water mains in the New Town Quarter of Prague in 2009-2011. While trenches for the water mains were being dug in August 2011, it was discovered that a ditch ran through the cemetery at the Church of St Michael. Discovered at the bottom of the ditch were undamaged coffins with skeletal remains in their original position, dating to the final phase of burying in the second half of the 18th century. A total of 22 Baroque graves were explored at the site (Omelka

& Selmi Wallisová, 2014, in press)

10 Graves inside St Vitus Cathedral at Prague Castle have a special standing among burials. Only representatives of the first three generations in the long line of Habsburg rulers – individuals who had chosen Prague as the seat of their monarchy – were buried in the church, originally in the tomb of Bohemian kings built by Charles IV beneath the chancel. In 1589 the remains of Ferdinand I, his wife Anna Jagiellon and their son Maximilian were transferred to the new royal Colin Mausoleum built in front of the church altar. Emperor Rudolph II was buried in a monumental sarcophagus beneath the Colin Mausoleum (Bravermanová & Lutovský, 2001, p. 223; Vlček, 2000, p. 77). On the basis of archaeological and written sources, the cemetery at the Riding School (excavated in 1951-1952) can be dated in general to the period around the middle of the 17th century. It is assumed that the cemetery contains the remains of Swedish soldiers involved in the siege of Prague in 1648 (Blažková-Dubská, 2005b; Blažková-Dubská, 2006).

The next and chronologically the oldest cemetery in the immediate vicinity of Prague Castle is the cemetery on Loretánské náměstí (Loreto Square) in Hradčany. With a minimum of two interruptions, the cemetery was used from the Early Middle Ages up to the Early Modern Period (the middle of the 11th century to the middle of the 16th century). Finds of decapitated individuals and mass graves are documented from the earliest phase of the cemetery (Boháčová & Blažková, 2010). The last and one of the most important excavated cemeteries is located in St George's Basilica at Prague Castle, where the latest burials are dated to the end of the 18th century.

11 The abbesses were usually of aristocratic origin; three were members of the Přemyslid family. The ranks of Order sisters were typically composed of girls and women from noble and wealthy families (Ekert, 1883, p. 82).

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Historical burial grounds are an enormous archaeological resource and have the potential to inform studies not only of demography or the history of disease and mortality, but also histories of the body, of emotion and changing relationships, of religious and other beliefs about death, and of changing social relationships, values and aspirations.

The focus of this volume is on the archaeology of the dead themselves: the below-ground material remains of buried individuals recovered by archaeological excavation, burials recovered from crypts, vaults and mausoleums. The authors included in the volume represent a diverse range of countries, perspectives and approaches. They seek to broaden our understanding of the approach to body as a cultural object and the way that the burial of the dead creates memories and shapes posterity for the living and for future generations.

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